J. S. COTMAN

DAVID COX

PETER DE WINT

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MASTERS OF ENGLISH LANDSCAPE PAINTING

J. S. COTMAN
DAVID COX
PETER DE WINT

EDITED BY CHARLES HOLME

JOHN LANE, OFFICES OF 'THE INTERNATIONAL STUDIO,' 67 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK MCMIII

PREFATORY NOTE

This is the first serious effort to do some measure of justice to the work of J. S. Cotman, of David Cox, and of Peter De Wint. Hitherto, in all articles and books, these masters of the brush have been represented only by black-and-white illustrations, whereas the present volume contains numerous plates in colour which have been reproduced by an elaborate process in which every combination of tint has been closely imitated.

The Editor acknowledges with gratitude the assistance which has come to him from many quarters. In preparing illustrations for the article on Cotman, he has received invaluable help from Mr. James Reeve, the well-known expert, from Mr. Sidney Colvin, Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, Mr. Laurence Binyon, Mr. R. J. Colman, Mr. George Holmes, Mr. G. W. Girtin, and Mr. James Orrock. Three of the special plates in black-and-white were reproduced from prints kindly lent by the Autotype Company.

The illustrations of Cox's work are from pictures and drawings in many collections. Mr. Gerald Robinson, Mr. Orrock, Mr. C. C. Eley, Mr. Arthur Sanderson, Mr. O. S. Andreae, Mr. F. L. Emanuel, Mr. Whitworth Wallis, Mr. T. J. Barratt, Messrs. Thos. Agnew and Sons, the British Museum, the South Kensington Museum, and the Art Galleries at Birmingham, Manchester, and Bury, have all contributed, with the result that David Cox may be studied in every phase of his original art. Those reproductions that bear no acknowledgment are all from photographs belonging to Mr. James Orrock.

The section on De Wint owes much of its variety to the kindness of the painter's granddaughter, Miss H. H. Tatlock. The De Wint drawings at South Kensington are well represented. Mr. W. G. Rawlinson has kindly lent the painter's study for the *Woody Landscape;* there is a good sketch from Mr. J. L. Roget's collection; and Sir Walter Armstrong has permitted illustrations to be given of several plates in his fine "Memoir of Peter De Wint" (Macmillan, 1888). Then, as regards the colour-plates, they are from water-colours belonging to three collectors —Miss H. H. Tatlock, Mr. James Orrock, and Mr. Arthur Sanderson.

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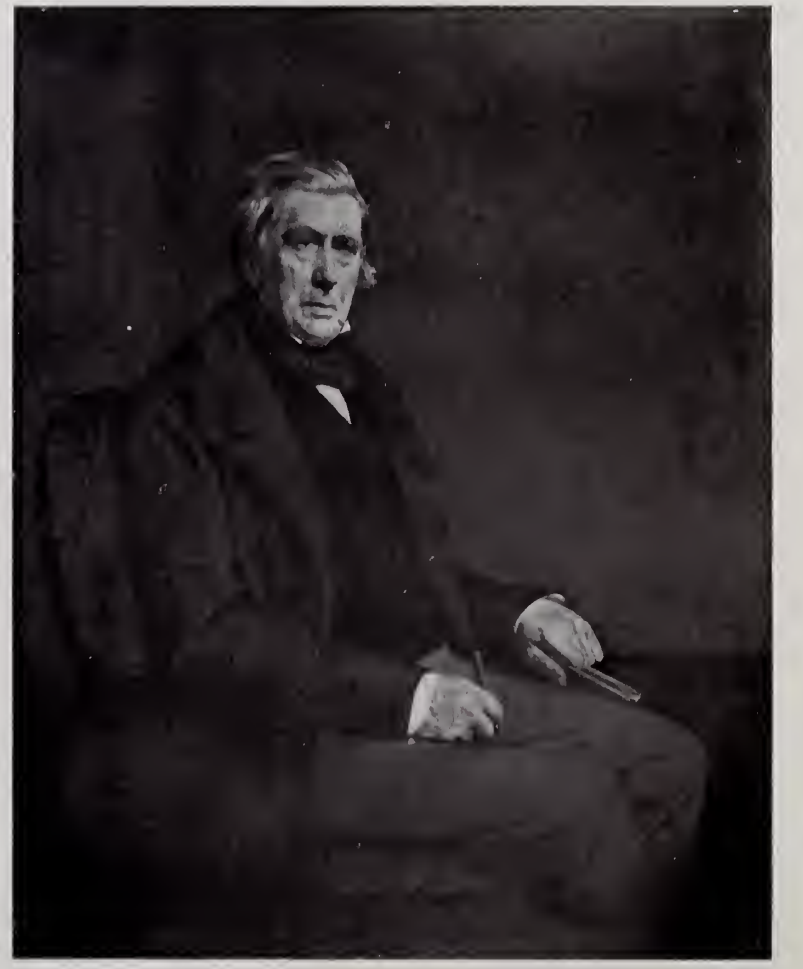
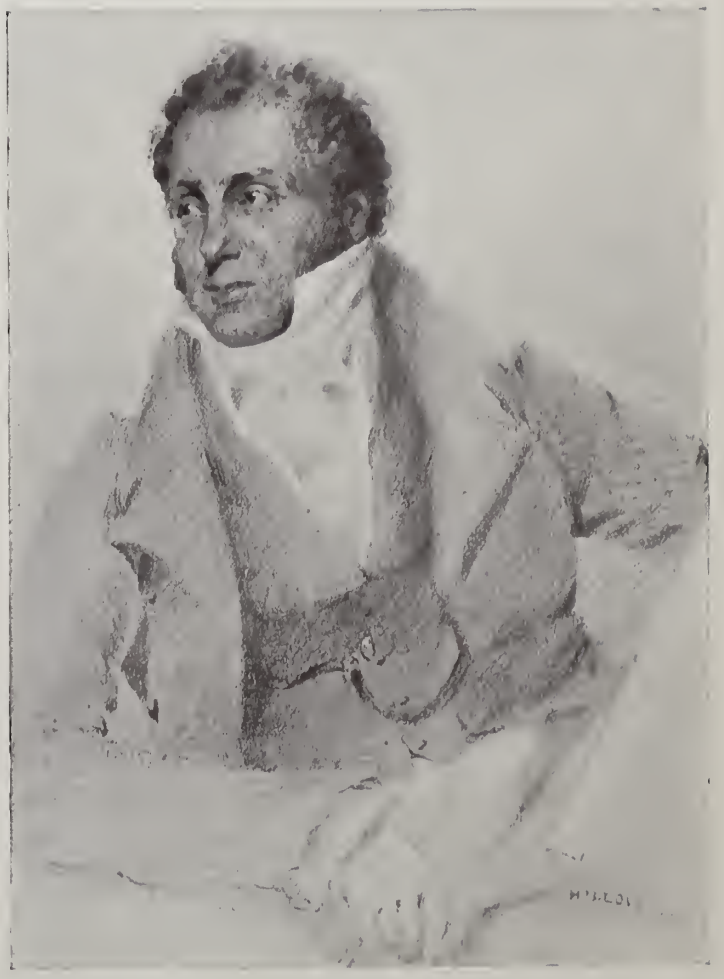
"The Life and Work of David Cox." Six Special Plates and Fifty-Nine Illustrations in Half-Tone. Written by A. L. Baldry.

"The Life and Work of Peter De Wint." Seven Special Plates and Forty-Four Illustrations in Half-Tone. Written by Walter Shaw Sparrow.



In the Birmingham Art Gallery

PORTRAIT OF DAVID COX (1855). FROM THE PAINTING BY SIR J. W. GORDON, R.A.



(In the Collection of James Reeve, Esq.)

PORTRAIT OF J. S. COTMAN. FROM THE WATER-COLOUR BY H. B. LOVE, 1830

THE LIFE AND WORK OF JOHN SELL COTMAN

" Y VIEWS in life are so completely blasted, that I sink under the repeated and constant exertion of body and mind. Every effort has been tried, even without the hope of success; hence that loss of spirits amounting almost to despair.

MY eldest son, who is following the same miserable profession with myself, feels the same hopelessness; and his powers, once so promising, are evidently paralysed, and his health and spirits gone. My amiable and deserving wife bears her part with fortitude. But the worm is there. My children cannot but feel the contagion. As a husband and father, bound by every tie, human and divine, to cherish and protect them, I leave you to suppose how impossible it must be for me to feel one joy divided from them. I watch them, and they me, narrowly; and I see enough to make me broken-hearted."

So wrote Cotman to a friend in the middle of his career. The deep despondency of his words was not indeed habitual; he could rally, and did rally. His high-strung febrile nature, liable to fits of extreme depression, responded easily to happy influences. After 1829, when this letter was written, he was to experience some slight measure of success, brief gleams of sunshine, and a few small hints of recognition for his work. But anything like real success or adequate recognition never came. The history of Cotman's life is the history of one marvellously sensitive to the beauty of the world, marvellously endowed in eye and hand to record his visions of that beauty; ripening early, working with enthusiasm, yet unable to make any livelihood by the best of his production; driven more and more to the drudgery of teaching, which if it does not paralyse yet impairs his art, makes it less the spontaneous expression of his mind, and consumes the best years of his manhood; never escaping from this drudgery, yet never succumbing to it, and from time to time still striking out for himself some newly discovered beauty, if never again reaching the serene mastery of his youth; till at last he dies, of no disease but sheer exhaustion, worn out at sixty.

In an auction at Christie's in 1836, six years before Cotman's death, some of his finest drawings were sold. Of all his water-colours *Greta Bridge* is perhaps the very best; it is indeed among

the very best water-colours ever produced in England. It fetched just eight shillings. None of his oil paintings, at a sale in 1834 at Norwich, fetched more than five guineas. Remember this, and judge with what sort of courage Cotman worked on. Absolute starvation might have been kinder.

Those who create are rarely known at their true worth in their lifetime, but they nourish the sustaining hope that Time will surely bring them justice. If it were not so, the world would be an ill place indeed. Time does bring justice, but is sometimes very slow in bringing it. Cotman is one of the finest spirits who ever worked in landscape art. Yet how has he been treated since his death, even in his native country? Ruskin, so ready with full praise for Prout and Hunt, for Robson and Copley Fielding, never, I think, mentions Cotman, who is far above all of these. Mr. Wedmore has written enthusiastically of him, but his voice has been almost alone. Mr. D. S. MacColl in his recently published "Nineteenth Century Art" has an appreciative and discriminating chapter on Cotman; though one cannot help lamenting that the example by which it is illustrated seems, so far as one can judge from the reproduction, to have little to do with the artist, and represents a port in Holland, where he never was. Which brings me to another point. His name has, it is true, acquired a certain prestige in the picture-market; but what has he gained from this? Only that, whoever possesses a picture of the Norwich school seems to feel himself at liberty to give it Cotman's name without inquiry. Scarcely a sale or exhibition of English pictures occurs without some so-called Cotman, though quite often it may be a painting that has no remote resemblance to his work. It is hardly too much to say that he is best known by pictures which he never painted. To crown his posthumous misfortunes, the National Gallery, a few years ago, purchased what purports to be an important and representative picture which no one who has given a brief study to the artist's authentic work can accept as his. It has nothing of his design, only the slightest resemblance to his brush-work, nothing of his colour, nothing of his knowledge of boats and of the sea. Yet in all these points Cotman is strongly distinctive. Even supposing that he had painted it in some hour of aberration, it would be a deep injustice to his memory that this should represent him to the nation. If labelled E. W. Cooke, one might pass it as a hasty and inferior example of that painter's style. I do not believe it to be Cooke's work, but his name would be a more plausible finger-post to its origin than Cotman's.

The few oil paintings then which Cotman was able to produce, with little leisure and practically no commissions—nor did he work at oils except during certain portions of his career—are swamped for the public, in the far greater mass of work attributed to him on little or no grounds; and, strangely enough, it is not usually because of likeness to his style that a picture is dubbed with his name, for in many cases there is no hint of likeness, but simply because it is striking and the authorship uncertain. Any forcible sea-piece has a chance of getting christened his in time.

With the drawings which he produced in infinitely greater number the case is different, though the result is much the same. As in life he was forced to be a drawing-master, so after death it is the product of his drudgery, not of his delight, which is usually made to represent him. During the latter part of his life he produced many drawings which, with all their accomplishment, are hardly worthy of him. Yet it is these which one usually sees exhibited, at least in London. Numbers of his earlier and finer drawings have, I imagine, perished through long service as copies for his pupils.

But there is happily another side to this picture. If people in general have been for the most part far too careless in giving Cotman's name to pictures, still there have been one or two art-lovers and collectors who have always valued him at his proper worth, who have been jealous of his honour, and studious of his fame. Foremost among these is Mr. James Reeve of Norwich, who has devoted his life to the study of the Norwich painters, and more especially to the study of Cotman. A friend of Cotman's son, brought up in the traditions of the school, he has spared no pains in sifting and establishing the information which he has had peculiar opportunities for acquiring. His collection of Cotman drawings, formed with scrupulous choice, is the best material extant for studying that artist; it represents him both in colour and in black and white at every period of his career. Mr. Reeve is the acknowledged authority on the Norwich painters; and if he errs, it is on the side of caution in accepting work as genuine; but those who have given any study to this school must confess that with all its productions, and especially those ascribed to its two chief masters, caution can hardly be excessive.

The bulk of Mr. Reeve's collection is now the property of the nation, and in the British Museum. The greater part of our illustrations are drawn from this source.

John Sell Cotman, the eldest son of a well-to-do silk mercer, was

born at Norwich, May 16, 1782. His bent for art showed itself in early boyhood. There is already a sense of style, as well as practised skill, in an Indian-ink drawing in the British Museum Collection, dated 1794. It shows that the boy of twelve was well on his way to the finding of those conventions which the man was to mature. His parents consulted Opie, then at Norwich, who advised any profession rather than a painter's. But the boy had his will, and at sixteen or seventeen he had found his way to London.

Stories are told of hardships and difficulties experienced in trying to make a living by the sale of drawings to the dealers. But Cotman was doubtless happy. He had found congenial comrades, and was appreciated as a friend and as an artist. At eighteen he was an exhibitor at the Academy. The summers of these next few years were spent in sketching-tours to Wales, Surrey, Shropshire, Somerset, Lincolnshire, and Yorkshire. Yorkshire especially attracted him. In the winter he drew at Dr. Monro's on the Adelphi Terrace, studying and copying prints and drawings in the company of Girtin, Turner, Varley, and De Wint.

He joined Girtin's sketching-club, founded in 1799. The members met in the winter evenings at each other's rooms and made monochrome compositions on a given subject. *The Centaur*, here reproduced, is an example of the work done on such occasions. It shows what the evenings at Dr. Monro's had done for Cotman, how much he had assimilated of the older masters, the intentness of his interest in composition, the resource he was adding to a rare native faculty for style.

The water-colour painters formed a group of emulous young men, eager, industrious, and ambitious, full of hopes and confident of their gift. Girtin's daring and mastery of his medium were attracting wide attention to the resources of this art.

Water-Colour hitherto had been used in two quite distinct ways. From early times it had been used by the masters of Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands, in sketches and studies preparatory to oil pictures. A few men, like Dürer, Rubens, and Van Dyck made water-colour drawings for their own sake and without reference to any more elaborate subsequent work. This was especially the case with landscapes, for which there was never much demand, and which were mostly done for the artist's own pleasure. Thus a sort of tradition was established, which Gainsborough was the first to continue in England.

But about the same time as Gainsborough, the parallel line begins with Sandby and the topographical draughtsmen. These men

"GRETA BRIDGE, YORKSHIRE." (EXHIBITED 1806.) FROM THE WATER-COLOUR BY J. S. COTMAN.

worked mainly for engraving, and their drawings began in the careful Indian-ink wash, adapted to translation by the engraver; over this was laid a timid tint, gradually becoming stronger and bolder in colour, as the drawings themselves came to be more valued apart from their use to the engravers.

Alexander Cozens and his son John Robert, who both worked in Italy and both taught in England, supplied a new element tending to merge the one tradition in the other; for the elder Cozens had founded himself in Rome on the still surviving style of Claude. The younger Cozens had a very great influence on Turner, and later on Constable. But it was Girtin and Turner with him who really made the modern water-colour.

Girtin died at twenty-seven, in 1802. His death lost us doubtless many a splendid landscape. But it was not only his own career that was ended, but his sustaining influence; and scarcely was this withdrawn than the men of lesser gift lost confidence and inspiration, their style dropped and flagged, and fell easily a prey to the public demand for finish and elaboration. Circumstances were all against them. A livelihood was not to be made from water-colours; the more artistic they were in aim the less success they had. Hence all but Turner were reduced to teaching; and in too many cases the drawing-master almost wholly superseded the artist. Turner wisely took to oils for a living, though he continued to paint for his pleasure in the medium he loved better. Girtin seems to have been resolved on the same course when death overtook him.

Cotman like the others took to teaching, after a brief trial of portraiture. Leaving his London circle he settled at Norwich. His life henceforward was to be one of laborious and little-congenial toil. But his soul was never subdued, though after the first few years his finest work is to be sought less in his finished paintings than in the studies and compositions which he poured out for his own pleasure and without any profit, a series of thoughtful, delicate, or impassioned drawings pursued with extraordinary variety right to the end of his life.

But the life at Norwich did not begin till 1806. Before that there were several years of hope and freedom passed in London and the wilder parts of England. In these few years Cotman reached maturity.

Let us consider the actual work of this first period. For convenience of reference, I will confine myself as far as possible to the examples reproduced. The earliest of these is the *Backwater in a Park* (1798). Cotman was sixteen when he drew this. The

colouring is very near that of Girtin, but the method is already extremely distinctive. The vibration of light on the palings, reducing the dark intervals to the eye, is an effect of which Cotman was noticeably fond. Compare the tree stems in *A Shadowed Stream*, almost diminished to threads by the strong light coming between them. But more tell-tale of Cotman's aims at this time is the drawing of the tree-trunks. These are left almost entirely flat, with a deliberate omission of any attempt to show their roundness. In all the drawings of this time we shall find this tendency to simplify the appearance of things to a system of harmoniously coloured spaces, discarding both chiraroscuro and modelling, if need be, for the desired effect. The furthest point to which he carried this conception of picture-making is seen in *The Drop Gate*.

In this aim Cotman was unlike all his countrymen, but was unconsciously following the universal practice pursued for more than a thousand years in those greatest schools of water-colour art, the schools of China and Japan.

The Chinese artists, on whose work all Japanese art is founded, systematically omitted all cast shadows, and preferred to suggest modelling rather than to render it fully. The clear stain or rich blotting of the colour on silk or paper was to be preserved in its freshness: the beauty native and congenial to the materials employed, was that which was to be explored, and none other forced into their use. To attempt complete realisation would have meant muddiness and confusion, and was besides contrary to their whole conception of art. It would be absurd in Europe, with our different instincts and conceptions, to dogmatise rigidly, or establish an orthodoxy which should exclude such treatment of water-colour as Rossetti's, or Millet's, or Barye's. Even in landscape, the use of body-colour and strong chalk or pen outline, doubtless is often best. But for Cotman's particular aims the Chinese or Japanese use of the medium was that best adapted. And it is astonishing how frank and bold he is at times in discarding light and shade. He will put in a tree which rises against the sky, with one brush-full of some chosen green, stem and all, perfectly flat. Or light stems standing out from a thick screen of foliage will be left in white tracery on a flat dark background.

Had Cotman not been so absolutely isolated, he might have pushed this way of seeing things to something like the point which the Japanese prints revealed, in the last few decades, to the surprise and delight of Europe. But there was nothing in contemporary theory or practice to support him. On the contrary, everything was

against him. This highly personal, simplifying vision clung to him to the end. But he was inevitably forced along with the dominant trend of his time : and that trend was all in another direction, towards science, the realisation of the 'quantity of Nature,' and ever new discoveries about light. With this came an increasing heightening of the key in which pictures were painted. Exhibitions forced this up higher and higher, as the artists to whom low tones were natural found their works crushed out of notice by more emphatic neighbours. Cotman deserted the tender tones and unifying grays of his early period, and more and more reduced the world of his vision to an opposition of blue shadow and amber light. Thus, though there are fine things in the coloured work of his later years, his best are to be sought, as I have said, in his monochromes.

But to return to the early drawings. Bold though Cotman's conventions are, they are used with unfailing tact. There is no cheap evasion into a facile formula, such as superficial imitation of the Japanese has produced in our own day.

One thing Cotman has in common with the Japanese, an extraordinary appreciation of the value of gray tints in holding and enhancing a harmony of colour. Look, for instance, at the *Screen in Norwich Cathedral*, as lovely as it is masterly in its colour-harmony ; the effect is conceived with clear intention and carried out with perfect understanding.

Duncombe Park carries us into another world. This is one of the most exquisite of Cotman's drawings. Its delicate power of execution matches the felicity of design and the beauty of conception. Spring woods in solitude, their freshness, purity, and fragrance; how the charm of these is brought to the senses, heightened and enriched as if by memory ! How delicious to the eye is that caress of gray strokes on the blue, in which the tremulous hovering of the slender tree-tops is imagined !

The same mood of remoteness and reverie saturates *Greta Bridge*. But here the solemnity is deepened, a note of severity comes in. The most obvious beauty of this drawing is the beauty of its colouring. Again, it is a gray of the loveliest tone and texture that holds the map of glowing and yet sober tints together. Simply as a colour-plan it gives extreme delight to the eye, for the *quality* of each colour is not less sustained than the harmony of their combination. Yet, though colour is thus imaginatively used, there is here—what Cotman is not always curious to obtain—extraordinary reality of atmosphere. The cold light that comes after retreating heavy

showers is in the blue band of sky, still filmy with the moisture of the air, and strikes clear outlines in the white range of cloud on the horizon, with a sharp reflection in the shallow water, where clustered rocks and pebbles lie wet and vivid in their many tints.

Under this bloom of tone and atmosphere the design is built up like a piece of architecture. Cotman seems to have found in this idea of a design when such a single arch forms the centre, a base for much composing. The bridge formed a central feature, combining both curve and angle in its forms, with which surrounding sky and wood and hill could be brought into answering rhythm ; yet while staying the eye it did not bring it up on blankness but enclosed a further vista. This leaning upon suggestion, leading thought on and outward, deepens the spell of reverie under which the drawing is conceived.

Cotman was twenty-three when he painted *Greta Bridge*. It was exhibited in 1806 at the Academy. Of the same year probably is *The Scotchman's Stone on the Greta*, which brings out with even greater force his mastery of brush-drawing. Where Turner, to get the spirt and dance of chafing water, would have worked half through his paper, exhausting every device of his marvellous resources, Cotman uses one single brush-full of diluted black, and with swift and light precision conjures from his paper, without scrape or scratch or added stroke, the fretted hurry of the stream.

Not far from these in point of date must be placed the monochrome *Waterfall*, still in Mr. Reeve's possession. The oil-painting of the same subject, modified and improved in composition, is of some years later ; at least, so I would conjecture. Here Cotman again takes the single arch, but, making an upright instead of an oblong design, he plunges the river headlong in a cataract, and raises a mountain behind it. This vertical composition reappears under other forms, especially in a subject called by Cotman " Height and Depth," of which there are several drawings. It is founded on the Devil's Bridge of the St. Gothard.

In Mr. Reeve's drawing one may notice the square forms of the imaginary architecture. A fondness for such square shapes runs through all Cotman's art, from the early *Pastoral Scene* in the British Museum to the late so-called *Château in Normandy*. The contrast of straight line and angle with soft cloudy masses or drooping featheriness of foliage, or with the feminine elegance of slender stems, is one of his favourite motives in composition. This fondness may be associated with boyish impressions of the great square keep of Norwich Castle, combined as it can be in distant views with a

"ST. BOTOLPH'S PRIORY, ESSEX." FROM THE WATER-COLOUR (1806-07) BY J. S. COTMAN.

(In the Collection of James Orrock, Esq., R.I.)

framing of foreground trees, and actually is in an unfinished oil picture of our painter's, for which he made several studies.
Cotman's chosen method of treating water-colour being what it was, it is not surprising to find that when he wants to paint the fulness and mystery of massed foliage he nearly always resorts to monochrome. There are a number of drawings made at this early time, and a little later, to which the sense of this fulness and mystery gives the dominant mood. Such are *The Shadowed Stream*, *Dewy Eve*, *Postwick Grove*, and *On the Bure*. These, with their dignity of mass and poetry of sentiment, are among the most beautiful of Cotman's productions. Surely nowhere before, save in certain drawings of Claude, had this particular charm of nature been so ntimately explored.
A quite early drawing, *Castle Eden Dean*, *Durham*, of about 1803 or 1804, has something of the same mood, with a difference ; there is just a hint of man's presence and labour, a hint which becomes full expression in a rather later drawing, *Breaking the Clod*. In this last Cotman touches the highest pitch of his art. The thoughtfulness and solemnity of *Dewy Eve* and its companions are here also ; but relieved and refreshed by a note of simple action, the pull of the labourer's hand on his horses' rein, as he calls to them in the morning stillness. The way in which every element of the design is brought to conspire towards the dominating mood, the beauty of the underlying rhythms, the directness of the means employed, the bloom and dewiness of atmosphere, give this drawing a completeness and intensity by which it ranks with the very best of English landscape. Made before Millet was born, it anticipates in its own way that master's discovery of his poetic theme. Millet, the figure-painter, dwells most on the natural dignity of labour in the fields ; Cotman, the landscape-painter, on the primeval beauty of its surroundings.
With most artists such drawings as these, expressing the mind's most intimate thoughts, would be found the prelude to oil paintings. But it is not so with Cotman. What a series of fine pictures his want of fortune has cost us ! He had a great ambition to paint in oils, but no scope and little encouragement.
Before settling at Norwich in 1806 he had not touched this medium. One of the earliest of his oil paintings is probably the *South Gate*, *Yarmouth*, owned by Mr. Arthur Samuel. It is dated 1810. The composition is the same as in the etching of the same subject. The brush-work is strong, even a little coarse perhaps in details, the colour sober and grave, but with nothing dead or gloomy in its pigment. The chief beauty of the painting, apart from its

noble strength and simplicity of design, is luminous harmony of tone, the clear and temperate atmosphere of autumn.

Wherries on Breydon, the small picture in the National Gallery, must be of about the same date. This is as full of Cotman's real qualities as its large companion in the gallery is empty of them.

A little later comes Mr. Cotman's *Waterfall*, one of the best of Cotman's oil pictures. I have already said something of the composition, modified from the study reproduced. The handling is here freer, the pigment laid on fat with a full brush, as in all Cotman's oil pictures. He never explored the resources of the medium, never using it enough to do so. The only change that comes is a change that is still more noticeable in his water-colours. This is the gradually increasing use of stronger and more vivid tints.

In the *Trentham* of 1808 or 1809, still more in the *Draining Mill* and *Mousehold Heath* of 1810, there is an increasing change towards depth and warmth of colour from the delightful *Twickenham* of 1807. These later drawings are exhibition drawings, or rather no longer drawings but water-colour pictures, in which there is a deliberate attempt to rival the solidity and brilliance of oils.

The *Dismasted Brig* in the British Museum is an exception, for though its colour is not specially beautiful, the brush-work has all the early lightness and masterly directness. It must have been made soon after Cotman had come to live in Yarmouth, and in daily sight of the sea.

For he was soon dissatisfied with his prospects at Norwich. He married in 1809, and teaching was not so remunerative as he had hoped. So at the suggestion of Dawson Turner, the Yarmouth antiquary and collector, he removed to the neighbouring town, though retaining his connection with Norwich and visiting his pupils there.

The companionship of Dawson Turner stimulated Cotman's antiquarian zeal—he had always loved architecture with a passion—and led to the publication of a number of works, which the artist illustrated.

Cotman's first etchings had been published in a set, without text, in 1811, while he was still at Norwich. This was followed by a series of sixty plates, published in ten parts, 1812–1818, called *Etchings of all Ornamental Antiquities in Norfolk*, and *Sepulchral Brasses of Norfolk*, published in 1819. But Cotman's most important publication is the set of a hundred etchings for Dawson Turner's *Normandy*.

Cotman's etchings are at once the most accessible and the least

interesting part of his work; so I shall be content with this brief summary. Nearly all are architectural subjects. Being coldly and baldly printed, they are almost always inferior to the drawings from which they were made.

These successive publications meant a great amount of work, and combined with constant teaching left Cotman little enough time for painting. Some of his best oil pictures were however done during the residence at Yarmouth, and probably most of the sea-pieces he ever did.

The drawing already mentioned is a good example of Cotman's treatment of marine subjects. Already in the first decade of the century Turner had painted the grandeur and terror of the sea, the daring and endurance of sailors, with a power by far transcending that of any previous painter and never since approached. In the sea-pictures of nearly all other artists there is something theatrical; but from this element Cotman is entirely free. He does not rival, or attempt to rival, Turner's magnificence of conception, his triumphant evocation of splendour and beauty from turbulence, discord, chaos, and destruction. But his vision is a true vision, and it is recorded with a mastery not less than Turner's. How easy in this *Dismasted Brig* to have made the subject many times more striking, by a little forcing of reality! But here there is the real blank helplessness of an utterly beaten ship, struck from a thing of almost sentient life to a tossed log, the wet, the cold, the listless wretchedness of morning after tempest, when there is nothing any longer to be done, the bleak and careless splendour of light breaking behind trailing showers on the last dazzling clouds of storm, and the heavy motion of a swell subsiding. With his innate predisposition to melancholy, and the gathering cloud of ill-success beginning to overshadow his life, Cotman could find in the sea tragic matter in plenty for his imagination. He does not treat it, like Turner, as the living and tremendous theatre of a nation's victory, adventure, or disaster; rather as the embodied plastic shape of his own thoughts attuned to a deep sense of all mortality. But, as we have seen, his production was of necessity so circumscribed that we have but hints of what he might have done. In view of the multitude of sea-pieces ascribed to Cotman we may, however, fix attention on the *Fishing Boats off Yarmouth*, now in the Norwich Museum, as a good test-picture. This painting hung in Cotman's house unsold for years till the sale of 1834 when it fetched £3 3*s*. In one of the few cases in which he is known to have been given a commission, he was paid £10, and the price of colours and canvas.

In 1817 Cotman went to Normandy. It was his first trip abroad. He left England twice again, in 1818 and in 1820, but again confined himself to Normandy. The result is to be seen not only in the etchings for Dawson Turner's volumes, but in a number of unpublished drawings. In point of design many of these are splendid, but in point of colour few are quite happy. This period supplies most of those effects of strong contrasted blue and yellow by which alone, unfortunately, Cotman is too often judged. But it must not be assumed that all the later drawings are of this character. The *Château in Normandy* (reproduced) which is more probably a composition based on a building near Whitby, is a very happy essay in blue and brown—the brown of autumn foliage and the blue of its misty shadows. Here, instead of the immediacy and simplicity of his early manner, Cotman uses every possible device for subtilising and gradating the quality of his colour.

Before this drawing was made Cotman had returned to Norwich. The publication of the *Normandy* made his name well known, and with renewed hopes, in 1823, he took a large house on St. Martin's Palace Plain. Here for years he worked on. But the hopes were disappointed, as before. Expenses grew as his household increased, and his income did not grow in proportion. During these years he fell into terrible depths of gloom. In one of his letters he describes how he heard one of his children say, *Why, Papa smiled;* only then realising, with horrified self-accusation, how much he had allowed to appear on his face.

At last, in 1834, what seemed like a chance of better days presented itself; the opportunity of returning to London and becoming teacher of drawing at King's College. The emphatic praise of his old friend, J. M. W. Turner, helped to decide the appointment in his favour.

So from this year till his death Cotman worked in London, with more approach to happiness than before, and less anxiety, but still prevented by engrossing duties from producing much. The drawings he exhibited tended now to more elaboration and finish than hitherto, and he introduced figures more frequently. Though he painted few oil pictures, he was as fond as ever of making studies in composition. The last year of his life is notable for the number and fine quality of such studies.

In the autumn of this year (1841) he went down to Norfolk. It was a stormy season and the floods were out. He found subjects everywhere, and made a whole set of drawings in black and white chalk on brown paper, all doubtless intended for paintings. One

"TWICKENHAM." FROM THE WATER-COLOUR BY J. S. COTMAN (EXHIBITED IN 1808 AT THE NORWICH SOCIETY OF ARTISTS).
(In the Collection of James Reeve, Esq., Norwich.)

that he began, but never finished, is now in the Norwich Museum.* A study for it is here reproduced. It is called "From my father's house at Thorpe," a beautiful view looking up the Yare, with the garden in the foreground. In the picture poplars are substituted for the pine-trees. One other subject was carried out in oils, and yet another begun; but the majority remain only studies. These fill one with regret that we cannot possess them as paintings; but as they are they rank with the best of Cotman's work. Something seems to have kindled his old self, and a new contact with nature gives force and matter to his imagination. Among these last studies the *Storm off Cromer* and *The Wold Afloat* are perhaps the most impressive. In the former there is a largeness and a strangeness in the composition which strike one as new in Cotman. In *The Wold Afloat* there is an intensity and passion to which he rarely rose. Again, it is the vision of wreck and defeat in the storm-heavy air, the beaten branches and drowned sedge, that, like a reflection of his own life, brings out in him a tragic insight and the power to record it with tragic terseness.

It was the last flicker of the flame. Before the summer of 1842 was over he was dead, of 'natural decay,' exhausted in body, and without hope or will to prolong the struggle.

Such, briefly sketched, is the story of Cotman's career. I have purposely said little of the inferior part of his production. An artist should be judged by his best. The quantity of uninspired verse poured out by Wordsworth does not prevent us from measuring him by the sublimity of his noblest poems. High success in all arts is lamentably and strangely rare; and artists below the very greatest have mostly made their impress on the world by repeating their one success, approaching again and again the theme in which they have found themselves most truly.

If Cotman had found support sufficient, he would have made paintings of what remain to us but as studies. Had *Breaking the Clod* been painted and appreciated, with *Dewy Eve* and *The Shadowed Stream* and other drawings of that type, how different an impression he would have made! Developing on this line, he would have been seen to anticipate, alone, the kind of landscape which in the Barbizon school stands for so much in the painting of the latter nineteenth century. As it is, he is far more truly than Constable a forerunner of that school.

* According to John Joseph Cotman's repeated declaration, his father never painted a larger picture than this.

Yet this is but one side of his art. In the beautiful early water-colours he stretches out to join the Japanese. As an architectural draughtsman he has no superior among Englishmen. In his sea-pieces there are the germs of an art rising nearer Turner's than any other. Sensitive to every breath of beauty, his art is for ever putting forth new flowers into a frosty and indifferent air. But the world allowed him no fulfilment or completion.

This variety of range of itself made against his recognition. The public will listen to nothing new till it has been repeated over and over. Turner alone of landscape painters is more various, and there was no room for two Turners in a single generation. Not that Cotman is merely a lesser Turner. He is radically different in mind, and from the first perfectly independent of his influence. Each admired the other. Cotman made a number of copies from Turner's "Liber Studiorum" and other publications. He gave one of these to Turner, who, after some years, presented it to a friend as his own work. When the drawing was remounted, Cotman's inscription was found on the back. One of these pencil studies, after the frontispiece to "Liber Studiorum," —*Tyre, with the Rape of Europa*—is here reproduced, and the original mezzotint along with it. As in all these copies, Cotman has modified the composition to please himself. In this case, however, his alterations are all on Turner's peculiar lines; he has deepened, heightened, intensified; and I think most will agree has come nearer than Turner himself to what one would imagine was Turner's conception.

Even if this be not conceded, it is plain that the younger painter was perfectly independent; he copies Turner in the same spirit in which Rembrandt or Rubens copy Mantegna.

But I would not for a moment be understood to match Cotman's art against that of his great contemporary. Their likeness was in their variety and in their freedom from provincial limitation. Their essential unlikeness was that while Turner's was in its main manifestations an epic art, Cotman's was lyrical.

As painting became more and more liberated from external conditions —a liberation perhaps more to be lamented than extolled—as the Church and the State lost touch with it, and the individual patron became more and more important, landscape inevitably grew in favour as a subject. Inevitably; for landscape, more than anything else, is the natural vehicle for a painter's personal thought and emotion: even before the days when it began to be painted for

its own sake, we see how large a part it plays in the lyrical art of spirits like Giorgione.
All the great painters have used it in this way. Scientific interest in nature has brought a new element of late years, but in so far as this interest has neglected beauty and discarded emotion, so far it need not be considered except as history. Turner alone of Europeans has been able to lift and enlarge this art to greater issues, and to paint the emotions of a nation or of humanity. It is in this sense that I have used the word 'epical,' because from epic poets we demand not only the expression of an individual mind, but expression of the general mind of man.
Cotman's place, then, is in a lesser rank. But the great majority of both painters and poets who have enriched the world for us are of this lyrical temperament. What were the qualities which gave his art its essential separate character? What is it that he gives us new? Skill, the mastery over means, is his in an extreme degree; and this alone has charm for all of us. We all take pleasure in seeing things well and surely done. But skill is not the measure of a man's greatness; rather we seek such a measure in the worth and greatness of what he is capable of receiving and communicating.
The mediocrity and lifelessness of so much landscape painting come from a shallowness in this capacity, a lack of kindling heat to melt the world of sight into the more real and impressive world of imagination. Cotman never rests upon the surface-picturesque. He would have echoed that cry of every poet to his soul about the world:

> "Would we not shatter it to bits, and then
> Remould it nearer to the heart's desire!"

He is not at all concerned to imitate the actuality of nature. As we have seen, he will endow things with unknown shapes and colours, if by so doing he can subdue them the better to his mood. He is for ever seeking a rhythm, a controlling idea behind the waste and abundance of nature; and what he creates, when his effort is victorious, coheres into a reality with a force and persuasion of its own. It is as a designer and inventor that he ranks high. If we take the whole of his recorded thought, I think that no one in Europe except Claude and Turner will be found to have invented so much in landscape. Of course, this is to take into account all those studies and sketches so few of which were to take shape as pictures; but to appreciate Claude duly we must do the same for him.
If we try to disengage the particular character of Cotman's tempera-

ment, I think we should lay stress on a certain *fineness* of fibre in his nature—a nervous force as opposed to robustness, making for intensity and depth of mood rather than for geniality and lightness. He has not the enchanting fluent grace of Gainsborough nor the supple confident sweep of Girtin, each in his own way sprung from the lineage of Rubens and his royal ease of power. He foregoes to a great extent the sustenance of homely matter, racy of some certain soil, on which Crome built up the simple grandeur of his masterpieces. We miss too often in him the relish of the accidental and the fresh naturalness giving sap and flavour to the imperfect and limited art of Constable. Cotman's fineness and intensity give us something different from any of these, but the absence of those qualities I have mentioned removes him from the danger of falling into loose facility or narrow self-repetition; and if his spirit is more akin to Claude's on the one hand or Corot's on the other, he is more sensitive, pure, and keen of vision, less prone to heaviness or tameness, than the former, he has more range of thought and emotion than the latter. To that capacity for sweet or solemn moods which both these masters possess he adds an architectural severity, bracing the luxurious part of his imagination with his sense for precise and pure line. By his gift, if not by his production, he ranks with masters such as these. And by his gift he should be judged. Or, if we judge him only by his maimed production, let us remember that it is we who condemned him to be less than himself, in so much as we all partake of the eternal indifference of the world.

LAURENCE BINYON.

"BREAKING THE CLOD." FROM THE DRAWING BY J. S. COTMAN IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

(Photograph by the Autotype Company, New Oxford Street, London)

J. S. COTMAN

(In the Norwich Museum. Photograph by the Autotype Company, New Oxford Street, London)

OIL-PAINTING
"BOATS OFF YARMOUTH"

C 1

OIL-PAINTING (ABOUT 1828): "THE BAGGAGE WAGON"
(Norwich Museum. Photograph by the Autotype Co., New Oxford St.) C 4

OIL-PAINTING (ABOUT 1828): "THE MISHAP"
(Norwich Museum. Photograph by the Autotype Co. New Oxford St.) C 5

"TRENTHAM CHURCH." FROM THE WATER-COLOUR BY J. S. COTMAN, PAINTED ABOUT 1810.
(In the Collection of James Reeve, Esq.)

(*In the British Museum*)

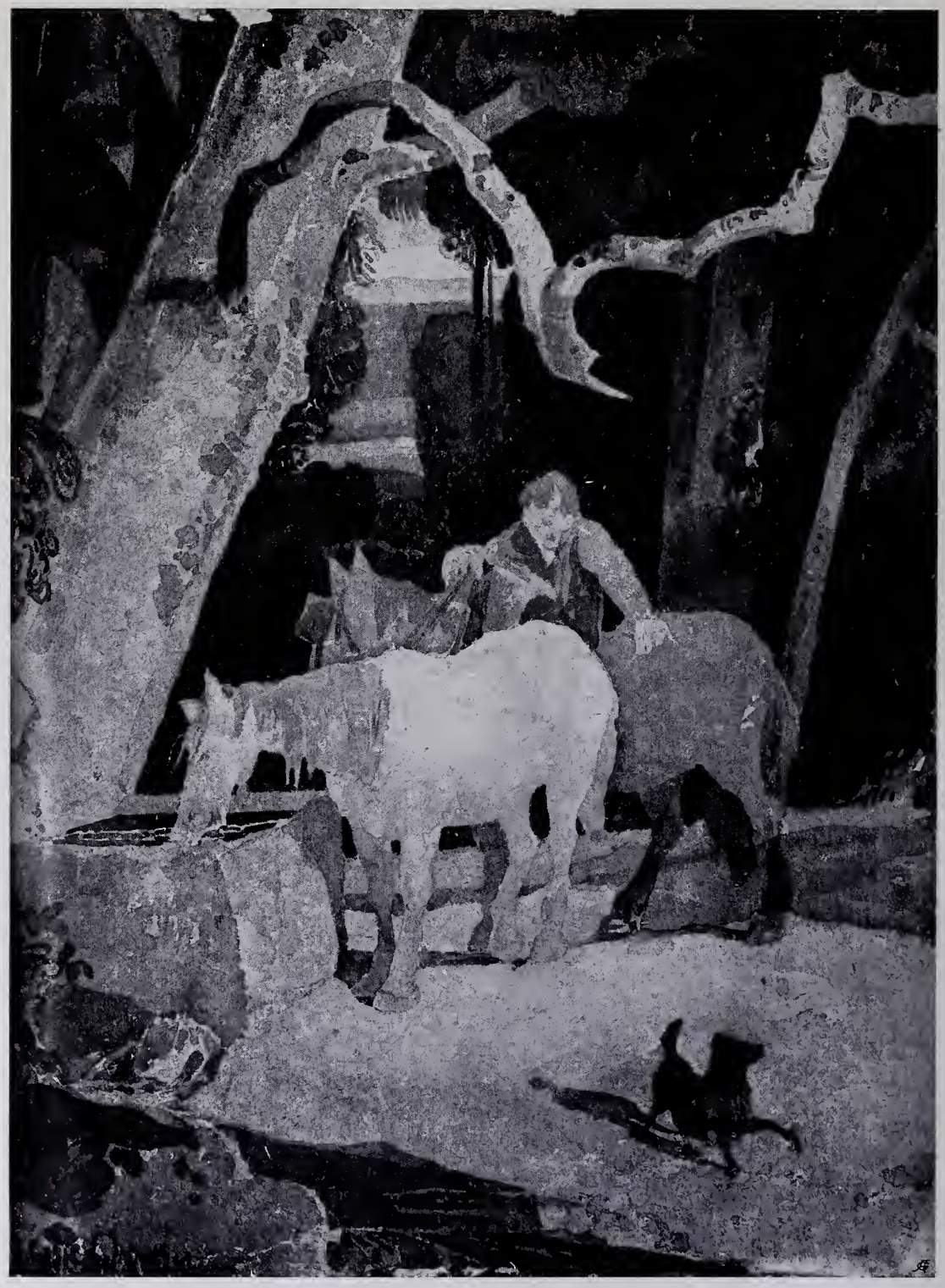
MONOCHROME DRAWING (ABOUT 1803)
"CASTLE EDEN DEAN, DURHAM"

MONOCHROME DRAWING
"STREAM IN NORTH WALES"

(In the Collection of James Reeve, Esq.)

(In the British Museum. Photograph by the Autotype Company, New Oxford Street, London)

MONOCHROME DRAWING
"THE SHADOWED STREAM"



MONOCHROME DRAWING (EXHIBITED 1806)
"HORSES DRINKING" *(In the British Museum)*

c 9

"BOATS AT SEA BY MOONLIGHT." FROM THE DRAWING BY J. S. COTMAN IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

(Photograph by the Autotype Company, New Oxford Street, London)

(*Study for the Oil-Painting. In the Collection of James Reeve, Esq.*)

MONOCHROME DRAWING (EXHIBITED 1808)
"THE WATERFALL"

MONOCHROME DRAWING
"THE FALLEN TREE"
C II

(*In the British Museum*)

(*In the British Museum*)

MONOCHROME DRAWING (1841)
"MOUSEHOLD HEATH"

C 12

(*In the British Museum*)

MONOCHROME DRAWING: "DEWY EVE"

C 13

J. S. COTMAN

(In the Collection of R. J. Colman, Esq.)

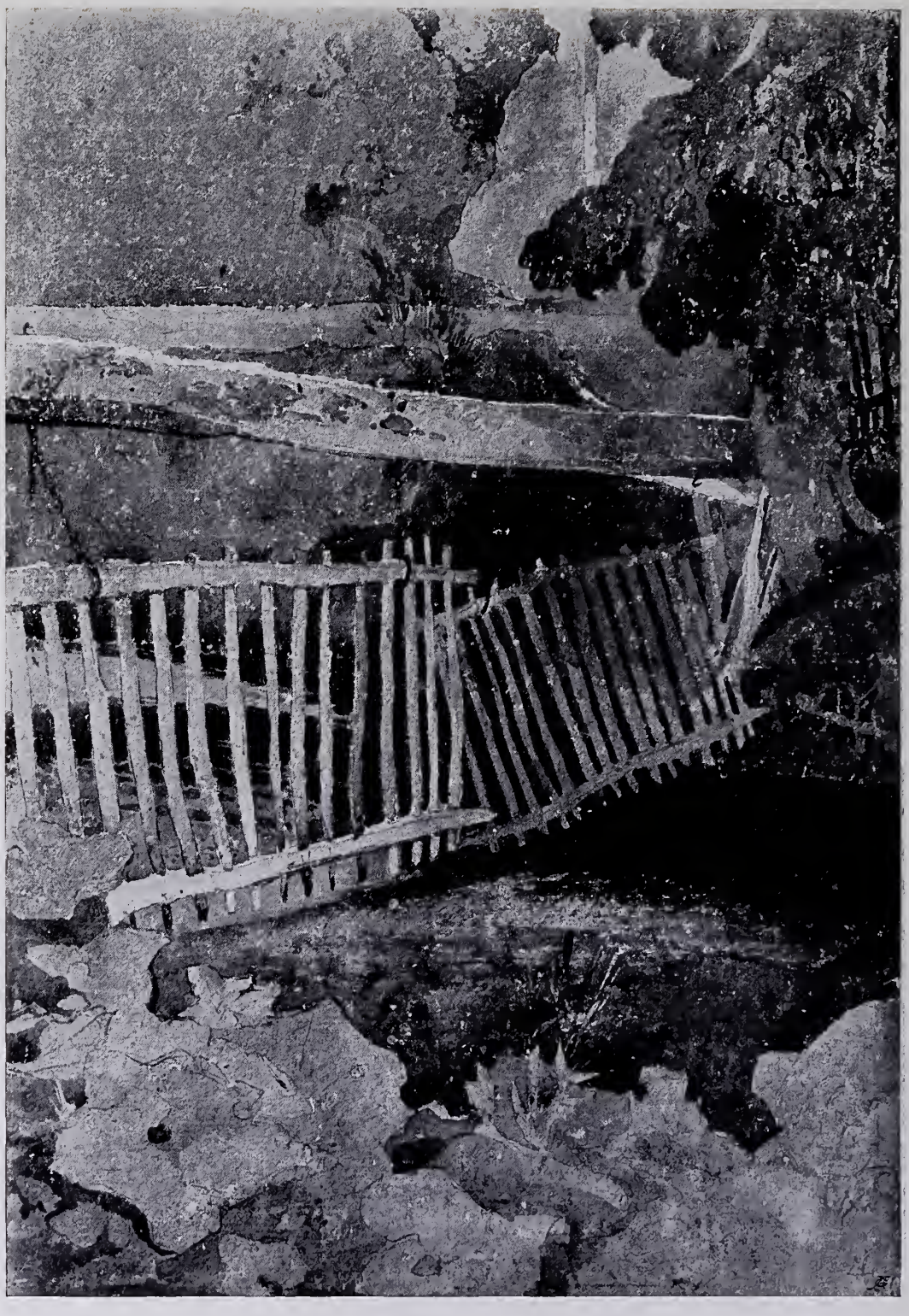
MONOCHROME DRAWING
"ON THE BURE"

"YARMOUTH BEACH." FROM THE WATER-COLOUR BY J. S. COTMAN.

(In the Collection of G. W. Girtin, Esq.)

(*In the British Museum. Photograph by the Autotype Company, New Oxford Street, London*)

WATER-COLOUR (ABOUT 1805)
"DUNCOMBE PARK, YORKSHIRE"



WATER-COLOUR
"DROP-GATE, DUNCOMBE PARK,"
(In the British Museum).

BRITISH MUSEUM
C 16

(*In the Collection of James Reeve, Esq.*)

WATER-COLOUR (1804)
"BYLAND ABBEY"

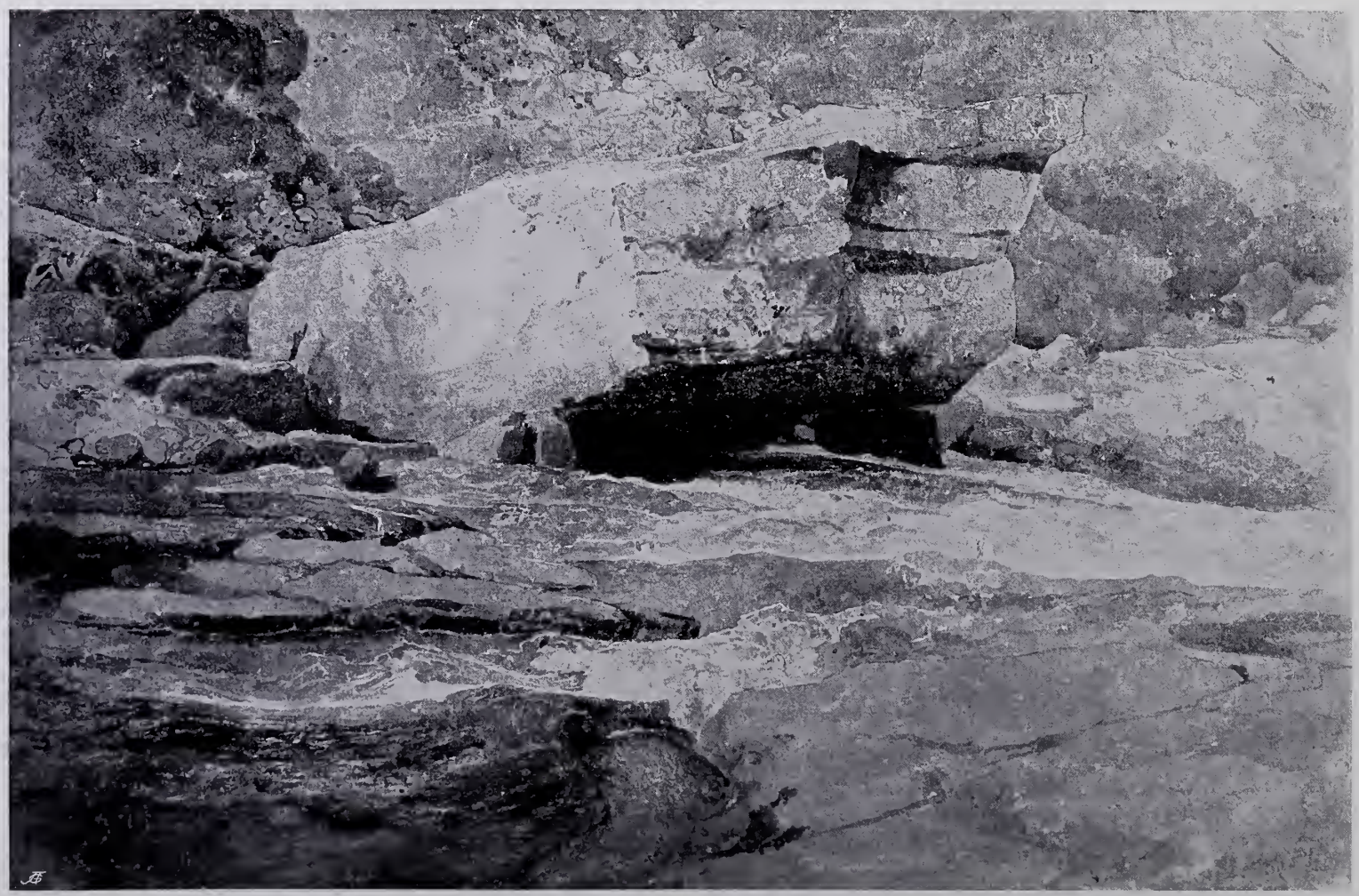
C 17

(*In the British Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR
"IN NORWICH CATHEDRAL"

C 18

J. S. COTMAN



(*In the British Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR (EXHIBITED 1808)
"THE SCOTCHMAN'S STONE, ON THE GRETA, YORKSHIRE"

"GATEWAY OF THE ABBEY AUMALE, NORMANDY." FROM THE WATER-COLOUR BY J. S. COTMAN, DATED 1832.
(In the Collection of R. J. Colman, Esq., Norwich).

(*In the British Museum*)

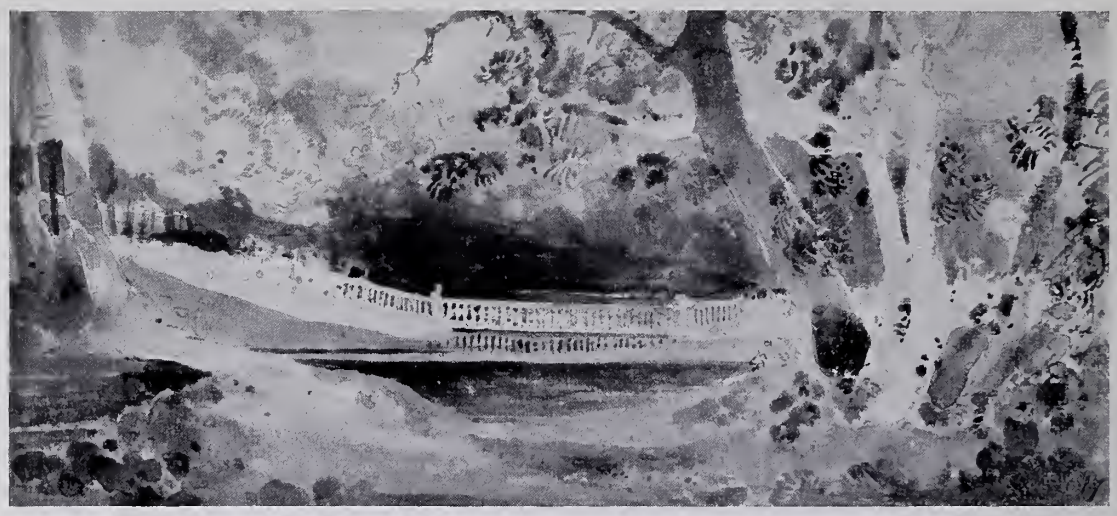
WATER-COLOUR (EXHIBITED 1810)
"DRAINING MILL, LINCOLNSHIRE"

C 20

(*In the British Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR (EXHIBITED 1810)
"MOUSEHOLD HEATH"

C 21



WATER-COLOUR (1798)
"BACKWATER IN A PARK" *(In the British Museum)*
C 22

WATER-COLOUR: "CHÂTEAU IN NORMANDY"
C 23 *(In the British Museum. Photograph by the Autotype Company)*

(*In the British Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR: "A DISMASTED BRIG"

WATER-COLOUR: "A MOUNTAIN TARN" (*In the British Museum*)
C 25

WATER-COLOUR
"POSTWICK GROVE"
C 26

(*British Museum. Photograph by the Autotype Company, New Oxford Street, London*)

(British Museum. Photograph by the Autotype Co., New Oxford St.)

MONOCHROME DRAWING
"THE CENTAUR"

C 27

(In the Collection of R. J. Colman, Esq.)

WATER-COLOUR
"THE ANTIQUARY"

C 28

CRAYON STUDY (1816)
"MARE AND FOAL"

(In the British Museum)

"LANDSCAPE COMPOSITION." FROM THE WATER-COLOUR BY J. S. COTMAN, PAINTED ABOUT 1830-32.
(In the Collection of James Reeve, Esq., Norwich.)

CRAYON STUDY FOR AN OIL-PAINTING
"NORWICH CASTLE"

(*In the British Museum*)

PENCIL AND CHALK DRAWING
"POSTWICK GROVE"

(*In the British Museum*)

J. S. COTMAN

(*In the British Museum*)

CRAYON STUDY
"MARSHLAND TREES"

PENCIL STUDY (1824?)
"STORM CLEARING OVER TREES"

(*In the British Museum*)

(*In the British Museum*)

CRAYON STUDY
"GROUP OF TREES"

PENCIL STUDY
"COMPOSITION WITH A CASTLE" (*In the British Museum*)
C 39

PENCIL AND WASH
"DEER IN A GLADE, BLOFIELD" (*In the British Museum*)
C 40

In the British Museum)

PENCIL AND CHALK STUDY
"ROKEBY, YORKSHIRE"

CRAYON STUDY (1839)
"BOAT ON THE YARE"

(In the British Museum)

"THE WOLD AFLOAT" (1841). FROM THE DRAWING BY J. S. COTMAN IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

(Photograph by the Autotype Company, New Oxford Street, London

CRAYON STUDY (1841): "FROM MY FATHER'S HOUSE, THORPE"
(*In the British Museum*)
C 43

(*In the British Museum*)
PENCIL STUDY: "AT BLOFIELD"
C 44

CRAYON STUDY: "RIVERSIDE TREES" *(In the British Museum)*
C 45

CRAYON STUDY (1841)
"RAINBOW AT WOLFERTON" *(In the British Museum)*
C 46

(*In the British Museum*)

CRAYON STUDY (DATED 1841)
"BELOW LANGLEY"

CRAYON STUDY (1841): "IRSTEAD BROAD" *(In the British Museum)*

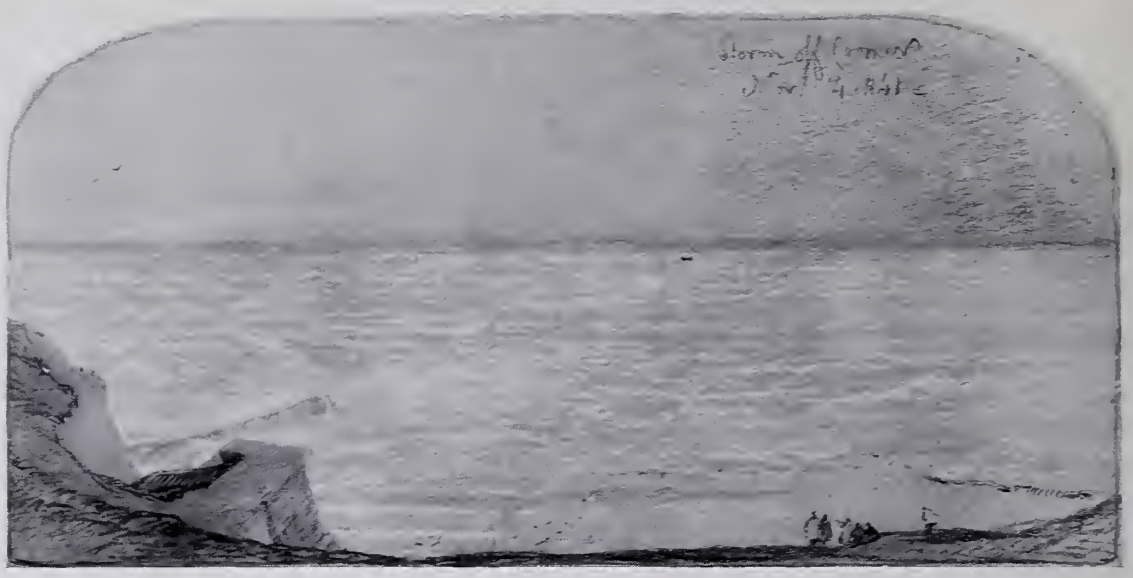
C 48

CRAYON STUDY: "HOLLOW WAY AT BLOFIELD" *(In the British Museum)*

C 49

(*In the British Museum*)

CRAYON STUDY (DATED 1841)
"BLOFIELD: THE OLD YARMOUTH ROAD"



CRAYON STUDY (1841)
"STORM OFF CROMER"
C 51

(In the British Museum)

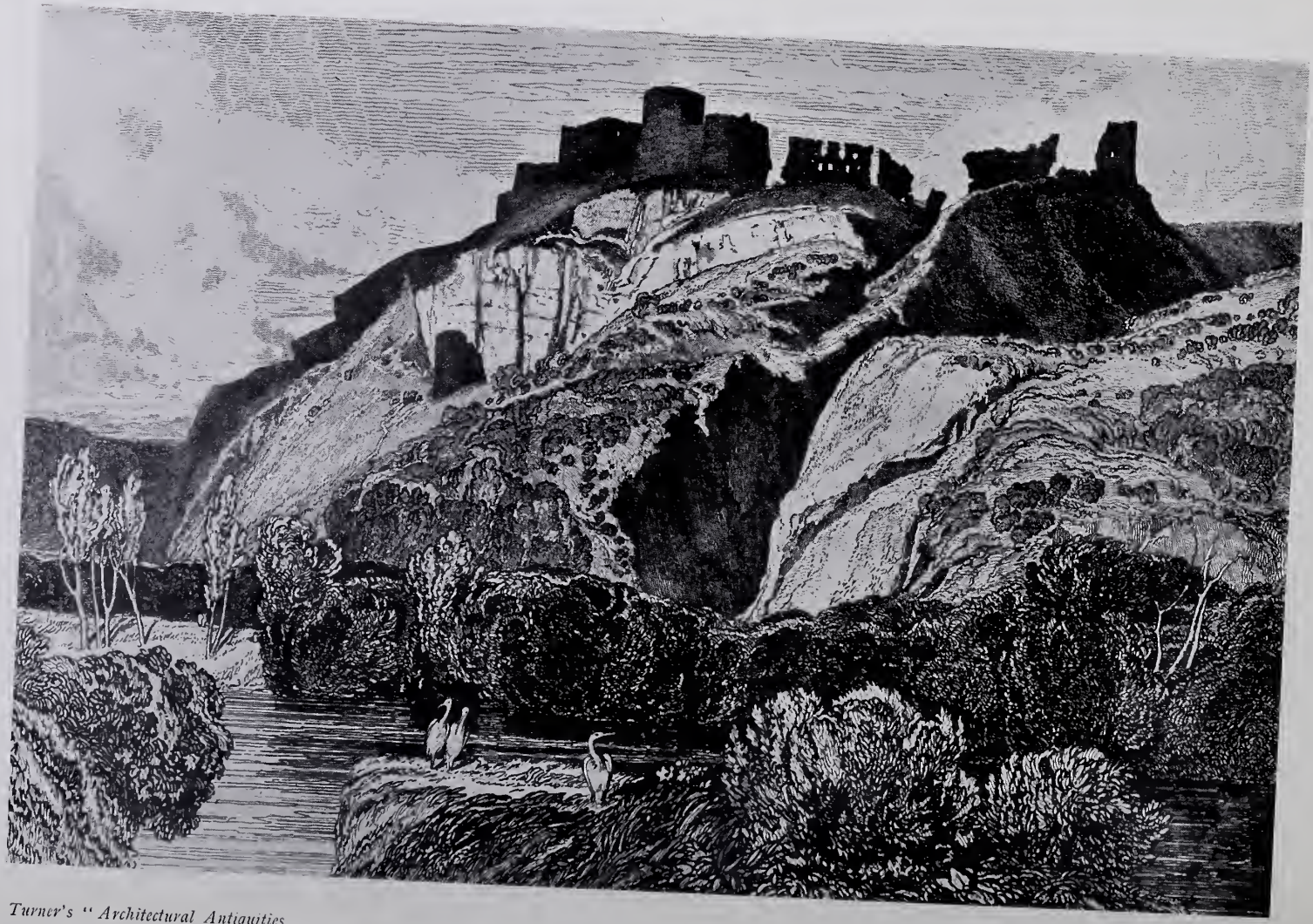
CRAYON STUDY (1841)
"THE FALLEN TREE"
C 52

(In the British Museum)

PENCIL DRAWING AFTER THE
FRONTISPIECE TO "LIBER STUDIORUM"
(Showing how Cotman altered Turner's Composition)
C 53

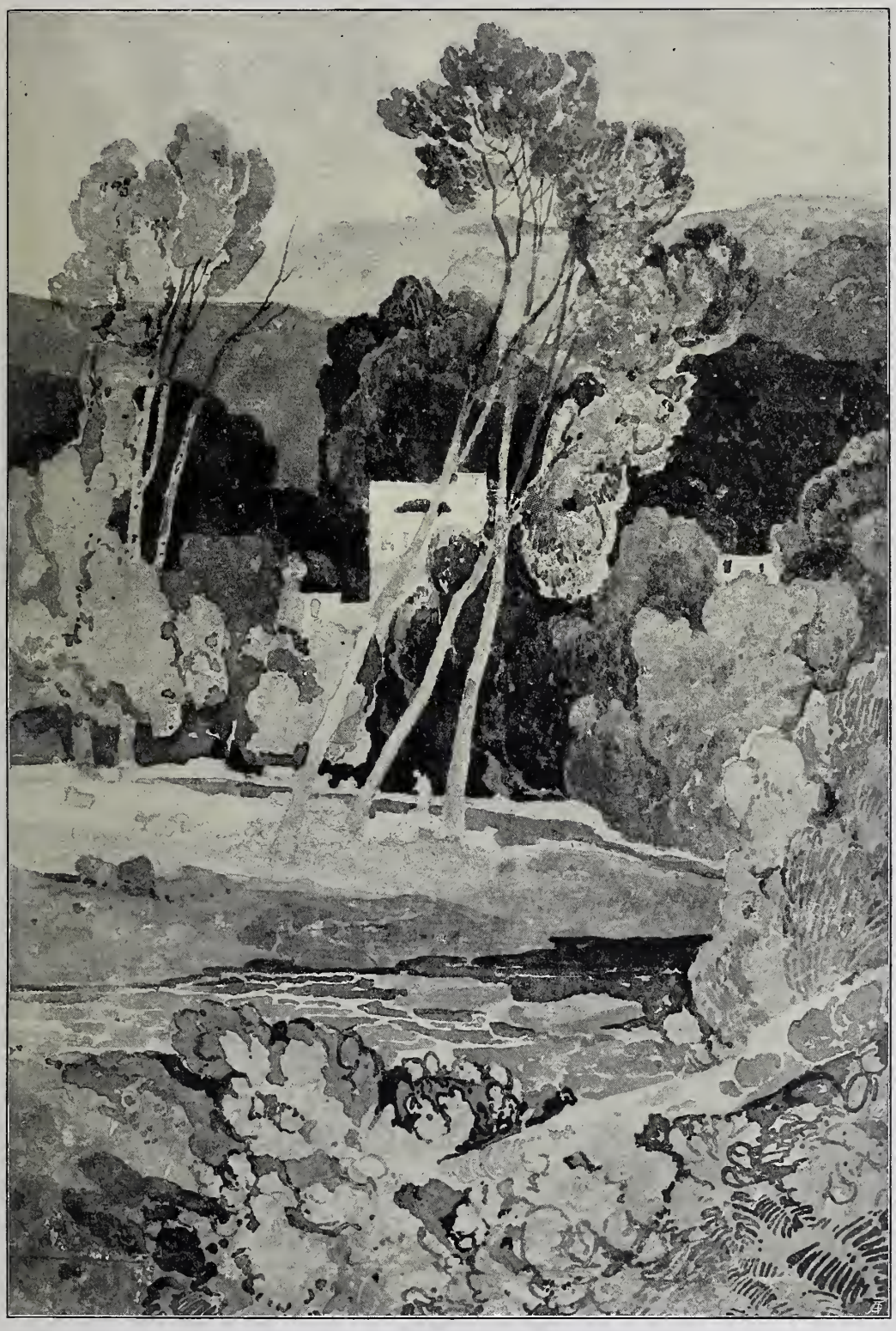
ENLARGED PHOTOGRAPH OF THE
FRONTISPIECE TO TURNER'S "LIBER STUDIORUM"
C 54

J. S. COTMAN



(*From Dawson Turner's "Architectural Antiquities of Normandy": published in* 1822)

ETCHING
"CHÂTEAU GAILLARD, NORMANDY"



"A PASTORAL SCENE." FROM THE DRAWING BY J. S. COTMAN IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

THE LIFE AND WORK OF DAVID COX

HE period over which the life of David Cox extended was one of special importance in the history of the British school. Many of the painters who were chiefly instrumental in building up the reputation of our native art were among his contemporaries, and while he lived some of the most notable additions were made to the long list of masterpieces produced in this country during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the time when he was born Reynolds and Gainsborough were still alive, Romney was at the height of his success, Turner, Lawrence, and Constable were young children, and Hoppner was only just beginning his career as an exhibiting artist. De Wint, Copley Fielding, J. S. Cotman, Crome, Samuel Prout, and several others who rank as our chief masters, lived and died while he was slowly making his way to the high position which in his old age was accorded him in acknowledgment of his life-long labour. All around him there was healthy activity, earnest striving after progress of the right kind, real sincerity of conviction, and wholesome effort to attain results which would do credit to a school with high ideals —all the signs, in fact, of a great change in the conditions under which the men before him had been accustomed to work.

It was, indeed, during this period that the movement away from the classic tradition, and in the direction of pure and unaffected naturalism, became plainly perceptible. In the eighteenth century the idea prevailed that the practice of art involved the observation of certain formalities, certain conventions of style and treatment which were too sacred to be questioned, and too absolute to admit of modification. But as time went on the stronger spirits began to rebel against such narrow dogma. There came men like Richard Wilson—one of Cox's immediate predecessors—whose classicism was flexible enough to permit them to study nature with some degree of sympathy. They refused to be dictated to by the believers in hard and fast tradition, and claimed the right to choose for themselves the way which would be best for them to follow. It cannot be said that they immediately departed to any very marked extent from what had been for some time previously a recognised custom, but year by year they widened the scope of their observation, and little by little they

increased the strength of the personal element in their work. The change was not a sudden one ; at first it was, indeed, almost imperceptible in its effects, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century it had come to exercise an active influence upon the subject-matter and the technical manner of the pictures which the better type of artists were producing, and it culminated at last in the pre-Raphaelite revolution by which the last remnants of the classic pedantry were definitely destroyed.

One of the chief claims that David Cox has to consideration arises from the fact that he was essentially a supporter of the modern point of view. In his work the strength of the naturalistic idea is not to be mistaken ; it controls the whole of his achievement, and determines not only his manner of regarding his subjects but also his executive processes. There is no straining after elegant formalities, no precise insistence upon particular rules of composition, no substitution of convention for direct inspiration ; on the contrary, in everything he produced there appears the frankest sympathy with nature's moods and ever varying suggestions. His receptivity to direct impressions was always the greatest of the qualities with which he was endowed, the foundation of all that was best in his temperament and the cause of the success which he made as a master of landscape painting. He had, innately, an extraordinary acuteness of perception which enabled him to decide at once what was artistically expedient, and kept him infallibly in the right course.

Indeed, apart from his natural equipment, he had little to help him in the making of a career. Like many other artists who have achieved a world-wide reputation he had a humble origin, and enjoyed no advantages of birth or fortune which would be likely to give him special chances in his profession. He was born on April 29, 1783, in Heath Mill Lane, Deritend, a suburb of Birmingham, where his father carried on the trade of a blacksmith and manufactured on occasions such things as bayonets and horseshoes for the War Department of the period. The boy received some elementary education in a local school, but very early in life he was taken into the forge to give what help he could in the blacksmith's work. Such a laborious occupation, however, proved to be beyond his strength. His constitution was too delicate to stand the strain of the constant physical exertion required of him, and in a very short time his parents realised that another way of earning a living must be found for him. An accident determined the particular direction in which he was to turn. He broke one of his legs, and while he was recovering he was given a paint-box to amuse himself with. So

obvious was the enjoyment he derived from this new possession, and so promising were his first attempts at painting, that when he was well again he was sent to a drawing-school in the neighbourhood to be trained in the rudiments of artistic practice. His progress seems to have been eminently satisfactory, so much so that when he was barely sixteen he was apprenticed to a manufacturer of those fancy articles which have always been extensively produced in Birmingham and the adjacent districts.

In this "toy trade" he had opportunities of turning his artistic capacities to account in many ways. His master, a man named Fielder, made such things as lockets, lacquered buckles, snuff-boxes, and similar trifles, which called for some ingenuity of design and some taste in execution. Many of them were ornamented with miniature paintings, and it was particularly in this branch of the work that the boy could make himself useful. He acquired in a short time no slight skill in handling the painted decorations, as one or two things done by him at this period, which have been preserved by his family, show very plainly. Had he continued long in this employment he might, indeed, have been led into modes of practice quite unlike those by which he afterwards became famous; but, fortunately, as it seems now, his experience of the "toy trade" ended before it had had time to affect his methods in any appreciable manner. The termination of his apprenticeship was caused by a tragic occurrence—by the suicide of his master—which threw the lad once more on his own resources. His work with Fielder had lasted for only eighteen months, so that he was then not much over seventeen, and full young to face the problem of making unassisted the wherewithal to exist.

The difficulties of his position did not weaken his resolve to be an artist, but they imposed upon him the necessity of finding something to do at once. So with the idea presumably of keeping touch, even remotely, with pictorial art, he took a post as scene-painter's labourer in the Birmingham theatre which was at the time managed by the father of Macready, the tragedian. Such an occupation meant to David Cox practically beginning life again, for he had merely to grind colours and to prepare the materials for the men who actually painted the scenes. But he did not miss any chances of adding to his store of knowledge, and even in this subordinate position he was able to master the more important principles of scenic art and to study closely its technicalities and processes. His opportunity came before long. The manager of the theatre, requiring some special scenery which he did not care to entrust to the local artists, brought

De Maria, the scene-painter at the Italian Opera House in London, to Birmingham to do the work for him, and Cox had as usual to help in the painting-room. De Maria recognised at once that his assistant was a man of more than ordinary intelligence, and showed his confidence in him by allowing him to share in the actual execution of the scenes. This incident seemingly led Macready to realise that Cox was capable of better things, and the promotion of the colour-grinder to the post of scene-painter to the company followed not long after.

His engagement with Macready lasted altogether for four years, during which he gained an amount of experience in rapid and direct painting which was indisputably of great use to him in after years. The breadth and largeness of touch required for effective scenery, the frankness of expression, and the avoidance of niggling and small elaboration, are equally necessary in the finest type of landscape work ; and there is needed for the proper construction of a theatrical set a sense of proportion and a judgment of details of composition which are quite essential in the proper representation of open-air subjects. The insight into these matters which he obtained at this, the most receptive period of his life, assuredly helped him to become the wonderful interpreter of nature that he was throughout his long and busy career as a producing artist. He might, perhaps, have obtained equally sound methods in other ways, but his theatrical life is by no means to be regarded as having interfered with his development or as having harmed the purity of his technical manner. The scenic element, it must be admitted, is perceptible in many of his drawings, but only in the sense that it adds to their dignity and amplifies their effect. Theatrical his art never was ; but it was often dramatic in its presentation of grand line and in its suggestion of the wonders of atmospheric tone.

When he left Macready it was not with the idea of abandoning scene-painting, but rather because he wished to escape the incessant moving about from place to place which could not be avoided so long as he was attached to a provincial touring company. On the advice of Astley, the proprietor of the amphitheatre in Westminster Bridge Road, he came to London in 1804, and was at once employed on scenery for the Surrey and other theatres. Whether he worked for Astley himself is uncertain, but he seems to have found plenty to do for other managers, and to have been for a while fairly prosperous in a small way. But as time went on he began to seek fresh forms of expression. He is said to have been inspired with the wish to excel as a water-colour painter by examining drawings shown him

by Palser, the picture-dealer, who took some interest in him and introduced him to John Varley. His visits to Varley's studio brought him into contact with many other artists and gave him opportunities of increasing his technical knowledge and his understanding of the difference between the work on which he was engaged and that which he must produce if he became a painter of pictures. That he learned much from Varley cannot be questioned; his friendship with a man of such individuality and such sound artistic sense helped him greatly at a critical point in his career.

During his theatrical life Cox had never failed to sketch from nature whenever the opportunity offered; and, though he was settled in London and in steady employment, he found time for excursions to the country in search of subjects. In 1805, and again in 1806, he went to North Wales to paint, possibly on the suggestion of Varley who had frequently visited that picturesque part of the world. By now Cox's drawings were beginning to attract attention; he was able to sell a fair number of them at small prices—at the rate of two guineas a dozen—and some which were exhibited by Palser brought him an influential patron, Colonel Windsor, afterwards Earl of Plymouth, who recommended him to many people as a teacher. As his earnings from sales and pupils increased Cox gradually diminished his activity as a scene-painter, until at last he felt that he could definitely break off his connection with the stage. The last set of scenes he painted was for the Wolverhampton theatre.

But this change did not by any means imply any great improvement in his financial position. He had to work harder than ever, and his earnings for a long while were barely enough to keep him in even moderate comfort. He gave, for ten shillings each, lessons in which his method was to execute before his pupils small drawings that were handed over to them as part consideration for the fee paid; and for the works which he sold he received sums varying from a few shillings for a slight sketch to five or six pounds for things which were large and important. Despite the smallness of his means, however, he married in 1808 Mary Ragg, the daughter of his landlady, and took a cottage at Dulwich Common. In the following year his son, David, was born, so that the young artist, even then only six and twenty, found himself in a position involving new and serious responsibilities. His consciousness of these did not make him any less earnest in his devotion to his profession, though they must have added considerably to the anxieties of this period of his life. He worked unceasingly, producing drawing after drawing,

many of which he failed to sell even at the trifling prices he asked for them. Some were bought by dealers in batches of a dozen or twenty at a time, to be resold to teachers for use as drawing copies, many he destroyed, and some of the larger ones were simply covered up with fresh sheets of paper so that he might save the cost of new stretching-frames. Several of his most characteristic productions—works now highly valued by collectors—have been found hidden in this way ; sometimes three or four were stretched one over the other on the same board. It was only by incessant effort that he kept afloat, by hours of weary tramping from pupil to pupil, and by tempting buyers with a constant succession of new subjects.

Yet, even with this endless tax upon his energies, he did not relax for an instant the studies by which alone he believed he could obtain a proper understanding of the principles of his art. He was fortunate in having round his home at Dulwich, then practically a country village, landscape material of an attractive type ; and he was able to work from nature there under the inspiration of really picturesque surroundings. At the same time he did not strive merely to reproduce the facts of the local scenery : topographical records were hardly what he aimed at, he sought rather to acquire a mastery over the subtleties of atmospheric effect, and to realise the significance of aerial tone and colour at different times of day and seasons of the year. He sat also at the feet of Velasquez, Gaspar Poussin, Ruysdael, and the other great masters to whose canvases he had access, and sought by analysing their practice, and even by making copies of their achievements, to educate his naturally correct taste. These studies of the pictures of his famous predecessors were not intended to save him the trouble of forming a style for himself, but to give him that scientific foundation which he felt to be necessary to enable him to express his own observations in the most convincing manner. He was anxious that no imperfections of knowledge should hamper him, and that no lack of proper grounding should in his later life check the development of his powers. In this, as in everything he did, he showed emphatically the sincerity of his conviction and the unaffected common sense which carried him at last through all his struggles into success definite and unquestionable.

How much he advanced in capacity and professional repute during this strenuous period was proved in 1813 by his election as a member of the Water Colour Society—now the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours—which had been founded in 1805. Some few years before he had joined a rival institution, the Association of

Artists in Water Colours, which had only a brief existence, and ended disastrously for the men who belonged to it. It was in difficulties almost from its first inception, and the works in its last exhibition were seized by the landlord of the gallery and sold to pay arrears of rent. Cox was among the sufferers, and this experience made him ever after shy of taking part in such artistic undertakings which involved the members in financial responsibility. The Water Colour Society, however, was always a flourishing institution, and its exhibitions provided him with a useful source of income. He continued to be one of its most active supporters till his death, forty-six years later.

He was now a man of thirty, with a wife and child to support, and seemingly the time when he could hope to depend solely upon the sale of his drawings for the means of subsistence was as far off as ever. So in the same year that saw his election as a member of the Water Colour Society, he applied for, and obtained, the post of drawing-master at the Farnham Military College. His position there was an honourable one, he was not badly paid, and he was among people who liked and respected him. But the formality of the military routine soon began to weary him, and the break in his family life caused by his being obliged to live in the college seriously affected his spirits. He found that he had undertaken work which was quite unsuited to a man who loved his freedom and had essentially domestic tastes, so at the end of twelve months he sent in his resignation and returned with a cheerful heart to his former struggling, but independent, existence.

But his small savings from his salary at Farnham would not last long, and as he had broken up his home at Dulwich and parted from most of his former pupils, he had to cast about for fresh employment. Just at the right moment an opportunity came, which he seized upon gladly. He saw an advertisement for a drawing-master in a girl's school at Hereford, where a salary of £100 a year was offered with permission to take other pupils out of school hours. Such a chance of obtaining a settled position in a town which he knew to be surrounded by paintable scenery, seemed to be worth taking, so he arranged matters with the lady who carried on the school, and about the end of 1814 took up his abode in a modest and picturesque cottage on the outskirts of Hereford. There he remained for thirteen years, teaching in many other schools besides the one in which he was chiefly engaged, busy with private pupils, but finding, whenever he could, spare moments for out-of-door work. Meanwhile he was a regular contributor to the exhibitions of the Water

Colour Society, and he kept himself in touch with the art world by annual visits to London. He even went, in 1826, for a trip abroad, and spent some weeks wandering and sketching in Holland and Belgium. Most of his work during this period was, however, done round about Hereford, in the valley of the Wye, or in Wales. He digressed into authorship in 1814, when he published his "Treatise on Landscape Painting and Effect in Water Colours," and again in 1825, when his "Young Artist's Companion or Drawing Book," appeared, both of which were admirably illustrated with plates etched by himself; and, about 1820, he issued a set of six engraved "Views of the City of Bath." Some six or seven years later he—with De Wint, Harding, Westall, and some other well-known artists—executed for a history of Warwickshire a number of illustrations which were engraved by William Radclyffe, one of his most intimate friends.

This incessant labour was not without its compensations. Gradually but steadily David Cox improved his position and became modestly prosperous. He saved sufficient money to buy a piece of land and to build on it a pretty thatched cottage from his own designs. This he sold for nearly a thousand pounds only two years after, when he decided that the time had come for him to leave the country and to make London once more his headquarters. It was only after mature consideration that he resolved to take a step which implied the abandonment of a secure position. But he felt that in London, where he would be in direct contact with both painters and buyers, and where his growing reputation would bring him as many pupils as he would be likely to want, his chances of going further in his profession would be considerably increased. The sale of his cottage provided him with a lump sum which, when added to his savings from what he had earned during the previous thirteen years, secured him from all anxiety as to his immediate future, and he saw his way to making a very fair income as soon as he was established among the right surroundings.

His confidence was certainly justified by results, for not long after he had made a new home for himself at Foxley Road, Kennington, he found that he was greatly in request as a teacher, and that his drawings would sell with comparative readiness. He raised his teaching fee to a guinea a lesson, and asked and obtained higher prices than had been possible before for his work. As a consequence he began for the first time in his life to earn money freely. His tastes remained as simple as ever, and his domestic life continued to be quiet and unpretentious, so this increase of prosperity enabled him

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to lay the foundations of that competence which he desired for the security of his later years. This second residence in London lasted until 1841. It was on the whole an uneventful period, during which he laboured hopefully, always gaining ground and never losing sight of his intention to make a place for himself among artists of note. About 1832 he was commissioned to execute a number of illustrations for a book, "Wanderings in North and South Wales," in which he was associated with such artists as Copley Fielding, Creswick, and Cattermole. Before this he had made a second trip abroad, and had sketched at Calais, Amiens, and Paris; but most of his painting excursions during the fourteen years he spent in London were into picturesque districts of England and Wales. He went on one occasion into Yorkshire; on another through Derbyshire; he visited Hastings, Lancaster, the Lake District; he painted many versions of famous places like Bolton Abbey, Haddon Hall, Bardon Tower, and Hardwick Hall; wherever he rambled he found something which would serve him as material for fine and expressive work, or that he could add to the store of notes upon which he drew habitually for his more ambitious exhibition pictures.

In the record of his development this term of years is important because it saw the growth of his power as an oil-painter. He had made some experiments in this direction while he was living at Hereford, but it was not until he returned to London that he tried seriously to acquire a mastery of the medium. With characteristic modesty he decided that his unaided efforts would not suffice to give him the knowledge he desired, so he went, practically as a pupil, to W. J. Muller, the young genius whose wonderful achievements were then exciting universal admiration. By watching Muller at work Cox acquired an understanding of the processes of oil-painting which he was soon able to apply with admirable effect. He is said to have remarked in amazement at the cleverness of his young teacher, "You see, Mr. Muller, I can't paint," but it was not long before his popularity as a picture-painter contradicted this humble estimate of his abilities. How much he learned from Muller it is difficult to say; certainly he made no difference in his own way of dealing with nature, and did not acquire any new point of view. Probably the lessons he received were of use to him solely as aids to the freer expression of convictions which had been formed by long and serious study. He knew well enough what he wanted to do, and all that he required was the explanation of certain technical details which puzzled him because he was unfamiliar with the oil medium. When the way out of these perplexities was shown to him by a worker of

extraordinary skill, it took him but a short time to adapt the teaching he received to his particular needs.

His rapid progress in this new branch of practice, and his desire for uninterrupted opportunities for carrying on a form of study which had fascinated him completely, induced him to finally take a step which he had been considering for some little while. He was now close upon sixty, and the wish to devote the remainder of his life to pictorial production only had become too strong to be resisted. Moreover, the necessity for constant drudgery as a teacher no longer existed. He had made a competence, small but sufficient, and his son was following successfully in his footsteps. The time had come when he could think about gratifying his simple tastes; more than forty years of earnest effort had assuredly given him the right to choose how he should occupy himself in his old age.

His choice was very much what might have been expected. London, he decided, had served his purpose, and he felt that with his reputation at last established he could well afford to retire into some part of the country where he would be free to do whatever he thought best. So in the summer of 1841 he turned his back on the busy city which had been the scene of so many of his struggles and hard experiences and betook himself to a quiet retreat at Harborne, near Birmingham—partly influenced, no doubt, in his selection of this new home by the fact that Birmingham was his native place, but not less induced by the knowledge that he would find himself there among old and valued friends. Then began what must have been to him the happiest time of his life. He worked without intermission at oil pictures and water-colour drawings, the subjects for which he found sometimes round about his house, sometimes in the delightful rural districts which were within an easy journey. Important productions came in rapid succession from his studio, and though the prices he asked even then were, when compared with the sums paid to-day for his works, almost absurdly moderate, he was able by the number he sold to live in complete comfort.

The list of things which he accomplished after he went to Harborne includes many of the achievements on which his fame rests most securely. There was, for instance, the *Outskirts of a Wood, with Gipsies* (1843), sold in 1872 for 2205 guineas; and there were *Peace and War* (1846), *The Vale of Clwyd* (1846), *The Skylark* (1849), and *The Sea-shore at Rhyl* (1855), which were all sold in 1872 for £3601, £2000, £2300, and £2300 respectively. For the *Sea-shore at Rhyl* Cox was paid £100, the highest price that he

ever received for any of his productions, the others he sold for sums varying from £20 to £70.

It was not long after he settled at Harborne that he paid his first visit to Bettws-y-coed, the little Welsh village with which his name is now so closely associated. He had gone into North Wales, with an artist friend from London, in the summer of 1844, to sketch in the Vale of Clwyd. From there he wandered by easy stages through the district, sketching as he went, until he reached Bettws-y-coed, which struck him as such an excellent working centre that he remained there for some weeks. In the following year he returned, and finding his first impressions confirmed by a second visit, he decided to make an annual stay in this fascinating village. He continued these visits almost to the end of his life, and they seem to have given him many happy moments, not only because they brought him periodically into a place the beauties of which he declared to be inexhaustible, but also because he met there a number of congenial spirits who had come on the same mission as himself. In these artistic gatherings he was always the central figure ; his geniality and kindness of heart endeared him to every one with whom he came in contact, and his cheery disposition put him at once on the best of terms with all his professional brethren. By these meetings in Wales, and by an annual trip to London to see the exhibitions of the Water Colour Society, to which he continued to contribute a number of drawings, he kept himself, despite his apparent isolation in the country, regularly in touch with the art life of the time.

During the winter of 1845 his wife died, at the age of seventy-four, and for a while Cox was completely prostrated by grief at the loss of one who had been for nearly forty years his devoted companion and helper. To his wife, indeed, he owed much ; she was a shrewd, kindly woman, whose influence had always been exercised in the right way, and to her constant encouragement was undoubtedly due something of the steady determination with which he had faced the many trials of his early days. There were many occasions on which he might have broken down under the strain and drudgery of teaching, and under the disappointment, which he could not help feeling, at the long postponement of his success as a painter, had not his wife's courage and confidence in his future kept him from giving way. She had lived, however, to see her faith fully justified and to rejoice with him in the gratification of his hopes.

For some weeks he was unable to work, but as time went on he realised that he would find his best consolation in constant occupa-

tion, and so he began a large picture, the first *Vale of Clywd*, and started also his annual series of drawings for the Water Colour Society. In the early summer he went with some friends to Bolton Abbey, and later he made his usual trip to Bettws-y-coed. After that his busy life continued as before, and he added every year something important to the long sequence of his works. There was the *Welsh Funeral* in 1850, and, besides the oil-paintings already mentioned, a host of magnificent drawings, like *Snowdon from Capel Curig*, *Besom Makers on Chat Moss*, *The Flood at Corwen*, and *Peat Gatherers returning from the Moors*, to quote a few at random. Some idea of his industry may be gained by noting that during the period of ten years, which ended in 1854, he exhibited not less than a hundred and thirty-six drawings in the gallery of the Water Colour Society. This was certainly the time at which his genius manifested itself most indisputably—when his confidence in his powers was most assured, and his knowledge of the resources of his craft was most convincingly displayed. After long waiting he had reached the goal for which he had been striving all his life, and he saw his claim to be counted among the greatest British masters frankly accepted by all honest art-lovers.

The first sign of any failure in his wonderful vitality came in June 1853. In the spring of that year he had been laid up for some weeks with a sharp attack of bronchitis, and shortly after he had recovered from this he had a stroke of apoplexy, which left him in a greatly enfeebled condition. Careful attention and skilful nursing restored him after a while to comparative health, but both his sight and memory remained permanently affected, and his previous vigour in working did not return. There was a perceptible change in the quality of his pictures and drawings, a loss of decision, an uncertainty of touch, and even an absence of appreciation of colour refinements. But as soon as he had sufficiently recovered he went, accompanied by his housekeeper and some friends, to Bettws-y-coed for the autumn months; and this visit he repeated in the three following years, though his increasing weakness made his attempts to paint out of doors fewer and more difficult on each occasion. The last time that he saw the place he loved so well was in the autumn of 1856.

Still, despite his infirmities, he was able to travel to Edinburgh in 1855 to sit to Sir John Watson Gordon for a portrait which some of his Birmingham friends desired to present to one of the public galleries in that city, and in the summer of 1856 he went to London and sat to Boxall for another portrait, which he wished to leave to his son. The latter journey he repeated the following year; but in

1858 he was unable to leave his home, and during the winter months he became so seriously ill that his life was despaired of. He rallied, however, sufficiently in the spring to finish a batch of drawings for the 1859 exhibition of the Water Colour Society. This was his last effort ; at the beginning of June he had once more to take to his bed, and he died peacefully on the seventh of that month. A pathetic story is told of the last evening he spent in his sitting-room where so much of his work had been done—how he lingered at the door when he was going to his bedroom, and said sadly, "Good-bye pictures!" It was his farewell to the art which he had loved so deeply all his life, his final surrender to the inevitable.

To understand properly the principles of David Cox's art it is necessary to view it by the light of his temperament. Only a man with a peculiarly balanced mind would have gone through all he did without being soured by his experiences, and only a devoted lover of his profession would have been able to keep the end at which he was aiming in view always in spite of the many distractions to which he had to submit. A less tenacious worker would have tired of the seemingly endless struggle, would have lost courage, and would have lapsed into indifference. But under Cox's quiet exterior there was too much strength of character for any such wandering from the right direction. He had been well trained in his youth by his parents, and especially by his mother, who was a woman of more than ordinary ability. Her guidance helped greatly to make him the earnest thinker and the conscientious believer in honesty of effort that he always was ; and to the habits which he formed while he was under her control was indisputably due much of the sincerity of creed and practice which won him his place on the roll of British masters.

It must be remembered that he was not in the usual meaning of the word a brilliant man—at least he was not a sensational genius like Muller. Possibly if he had not been obliged to labour so unremittingly to make existence possible at all, he might have attracted popular attention earlier than he did ; he might have made his advance by rapid strides instead of by a means of progression that was always slow and often painful. But more probably he would have matured gradually under any circumstances. It was an essential part of his temperament that he should convince himself of the absolute security of his position before he attempted another step forward, and each stage of his career was prepared for by a vast amount of preliminary effort. He was very modest in his estimate of his own abilities, though he was entirely free from that sham

self-disparagement which is too often the outcome of self-consciousness or conceit. Yet he knew that he had power which would bring him, if he had only the chance to exercise it, to eminence in his art. All he asked for was such a measure of appreciation as would admit of his doing himself justice, for relief from the necessity of spending in the toil of teaching the time which he wanted for better and nobler work. That he obtained this relief at last, before old age had sapped his energies, was to him a source of legitimate pleasure. In his life at Harborne he found compensation for all that had gone before ; and by the respect of his fellows, and the praise of the few who were best qualified to judge his work, he was cheered to attempt the highest flights. Success, however, left him just what he was before, a modest, kindly being, honestly in love with life, and a humble student seeking ever to master the great lessons which nature is so ready to teach.

Few artists have so absolutely reflected their personality in their productions as he did in his drawings and pictures. His broad, expressive brushwork, his fresh and harmonious colour, his robust sense of design, and his invariable avoidance of restless or trivial details were natural assertions of his conviction that the artificialities of the world were things to be ignored. He used no circumlocutions in what he had to say ; it was sufficient for him if he could make plain his meaning by direct statement. The "want of finish" in his works, which was resented by those of his contemporaries who could not see nature with his eyes, was really the brevity which comes from intimate study and exact knowledge. It was, no doubt, contrary to the tradition which dominated the early nineteenth-century art, to the faith in elegant classicism which so many landscape painters then professed, but for that very reason it seems to us now to have been one of the causes of Cox's superiority. Once only did he make a concession to the spirit of the moment—when he painted, in 1825, an imaginative composition, *Carthage, Æneas and Achates* in imitation of Turner—but the experiment did not please him, and happily it was not repeated.

Far better was it that he should have been in his work what he was by temperament, a realist but yet a poet, an enthusiastic sympathiser with nature who could with unerring instinct discriminate between her moods. He may, perhaps, be said to have lacked the intellectual faculty which induced other men to formalise their impressions, but he possessed instead an unerring intelligence and a shrewdness of observation which never led him astray. It was his own mind that directed every touch in his work ; he did not, or

could not, learn from others how to sink his convictions in accordance with the precepts of this or that school. We welcome his simplicity to-day as one of his most precious characteristics ; it has brought us an artistic inheritance of inestimable value.

At the same time it is clear that the full realisation of the importance of this inheritance was arrived at very slowly. Cox had been dead some years before the people who might have helped him most began to form any correct opinion about the claims of his work to really enthusiastic appreciation. The little fortune of £12,000 which he amassed by fifty years of close economy seems but a meagre result when we consider that the man who counted such a sum as an evidence of success is now hailed as one of the few great artists whom this country has produced. While he lived he had over and over again to put up with the disappointment of seeing drawings which he knew to be the best he could do hanging unsold upon the walls of exhibitions when those of his far less able contemporaries were finding ready purchasers ; and stories are told about him which prove that even with his gentle and quiet nature he could not help feeling on occasions some resentment at the blindness of the public to which he was making such strong appeals. The extent of his posthumous reputation only serves to accentuate the greatness of the injustice that was done to him. Surely less than half a century should have been time enough to enable people of average intelligence to see that the man they were neglecting was a master worthy of the highest honour.

For it must be remembered that Cox was not one of those painters who avoid publicity and restrict their production within very narrow limits. On the contrary, he was a constant exhibitor and a prolific worker, a man who took the widest view of his artistic responsibilities and had an absolutely catholic taste. As his biographer, William Hall, puts it : " As a master of English landscape he stands unapproached save by Turner, and in some respects he surpassed even Turner himself. His range of art is marvellous, alike as to period, to subject, and to manner. For over fifty years he was a painter, skilled in resource, unsurpassed in industry ; there was nothing that he did not include in his works—landscape, figures, buildings, animals, fish, fruit, still life, flowers ; the commonest and most familiar aspects of Nature, her subtlest gradations, her sublimest effects, all found perfect expression by means of his facile and powerful brush." This was the man who was, as may be judged from the prices paid for his works a dozen years after his death, estimated when alive at some two hundred times less than his real value ; the

man who was allowed to spend most of his days in poverty, and to waste his best years in hack work as a drawing-master. Truly the whole story reflects sadly upon the discrimination of our nineteenth-century predecessors ; and yet it is one the moral of which we are just as far from realising to-day. It is the curious habit of self-styled art-lovers to lavish their favours upon unworthy recipients and to look askance at true greatness. They follow a fashion blindly and unreasonably, and ignore the genius because he is too individual to conform to conventions which are based upon artificiality and kept in existence by popular ignorance. This was certainly Cox's fate ; even at the height of what seemed to him success, he was absolutely overlooked by the very people who a few years later were clamouring for his works.

A. L. Baldry.

"TINTERN ABBEY." FROM THE WATER-COLOUR BY DAVID COX (VARLEY INFLUENCE).
(In the Collection of James Orrock, Esq., R.I.)

(*In the Birmingham Art Gallery*
Reproduced by permission of the Committee)

OIL-PAINTING (DATED 1845)
"WAITING FOR THE FERRY"

DC 1

OIL-PAINTING (DATED 1847): "CHANGING PASTURE" *(Birmingham Art Gallery)*
DC 4

OIL-PAINTING (DATED 1849): "TENDING SHEEP" *(Birmingham Art Gallery)*
DC 5

(In the Birmingham Art Gallery
Reproduced by permission of the Committee)

OIL-PAINTING (DATED 1849)
"SHEEP-SHEARING IN WALES"
DC 6

OIL-PAINTING (DATED 1849)
"THE VALE OF CLWYD, NORTH WALES"

(In the Collection of Thomas J. Barratt, Esq.)

OIL-PAINTING (DATED 1850)
"CHANGING PASTURE"
DC 8

DAVID COX

OIL-PAINTING
"THE WHITE PONY"
DC 9

"THE CART-SHED." FROM THE WATER-COLOUR (1841) BY DAVID COX.

(In the Collection of James Orrock, Esq., R.I.)

(*Bury Art Gallery*)

OIL-PAINTING (1852): "A BREEZY DAY"

DC 10

(*Birmingham Art Gallery*)

OIL-PAINTING (1851): "AT THE FERRY—MORNING"

DC 11

OIL-PAINTING: "THE CARRIER'S WAGON" *(In the Collection of James Orrock, Esq., R.I.)*
DC 12

OIL-PAINTING: "AFTER THE DAY'S WORK" *(In the Collection of J. Orrock, Esq., R.I.)*
DC 13

OIL-PAINTING (DATED 1853)
"GOING TO THE HAYFIELD"
DC 14

(In the Birmingham Art Gallery
Reproduced by permission of the Committee)

OIL-PAINTING (1854-55): "RHYL SANDS" *(Birmingham Art Gallery)*

DC 15

OIL-PAINTING: "THE GLEANERS"

DC 16

(In the Collection of G. Robinson, Esq.) SEPIA DRAWING: "STUDY OF A WINDMILL"

DC 17

(In the Collection of Gerald Robinson, Esq.) SEPIA DRAWING (1809): "SNOWDON"

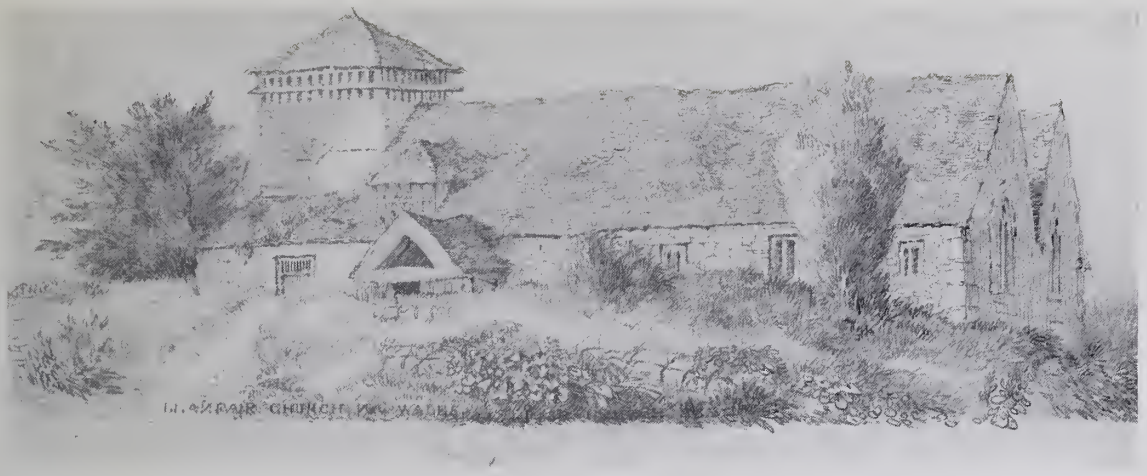
DC 18

SEPIA DRAWING: "SHEEP IN THE VALLEY" *(In the Collection of G. Robinson, Esq.)*

D C 19

CRAYON STUDY: "NEAR LLANFAIR" *(In the Collection of Gerald Robinson, Esq.)*

D C 20



(In the Collection of C. C. Eley, Esq.)

CRAYON STUDY: "LLANFAIR CHURCH"

D C 21

(Plate 30 in David Cox's "Young Artist's Companion")

SOFT-GROUND ETCHING (1819): "A WINDMILL"

D C 22

WATER-COLOUR: "WELSH MOUNTAINS" *(In the Collection of Gerald Robinson, Esq.)*

DC 23

WATER-COLOUR: "THE MARKET-PLACE" *(In the Collection of Gerald Robinson, Esq.)*

DC 24

"FLYING THE KITE." FROM THE WATER-COLOUR (1852) BY DAVID COX.

(In the Collection of Arthur Sanderson, Esq.)

WATER-COLOUR: "CUSTOMS HOUSE QUAY, LONDON"

(In the Collection of Otto S. Andreae, Esq.) DC 25

(In the Collection of Gerald Robinson, Esq.) WATER-COLOUR: "PONT ROYAL, PARIS"

DC 26

WATER-COLOUR: "DRYSLWYN CASTLE, SOUTH WALES"
(*In South Kensington Museum*)
D C 27

WATER-COLOUR SKETCH
"HILLY LANDSCAPE, WITH FIGURES"
(*In South Kensington Museum*)
D C 28

(*In South Kensington Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR (1830): "SEASCAPE"

D C 29

WATER-COLOUR (1832): "A COTTAGE ON THE COMMON"

D C 30

(*In the British Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR (DATED 1836)
"BARDEN TOWER, YORKSHIRE"
DC 31

(In the British Museum) WATER-COLOUR: "SHAKESPEARE'S CLIFF, DOVER"

D C 32

(In South Kensington Museum) WATER-COLOUR: "WATER MILL IN WALES"

D C 33

WATER-COLOUR (1840): "CURIOSITY"
DC 34

WATER-COLOUR: "TO MARKET
ACROSS THE WOLDS"
DC 35

(*In the British Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR: "MOORLAND SCENE"
DC 36

(*In the Collection of James Orrock, Esq., R.I.*)

WATER-COLOUR (1841)
"A SHADED WELSH LANE"
DC 37

WATER-COLOUR: "CADER IDRIS" *(In the British Museum)*
DC 38

WATER-COLOUR SKETCH
"THE WELSH FUNERAL" *(By permission of Messrs. Thomas Agnew and Sons)*
DC 39

(*In the British Museum*)

"WATER-COLOUR: "BOLTON ABBEY"

D C 40

(*In the British Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR: "NEAR PENMAENMAWR"

D C 41

DAVID COX

(*In the British Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR
"DRYSLWYN CASTLE, VALE OF TOWY"
D C 42

DAVID COX

(*In the Manchester Art Gallery*
Reproduced by permission of the Committee)

WATER-COLOUR
"HAYFIELD WITH FIGURES"
DC 43

DAVID COX

(*In the British Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR
"CHIRK VIADUCT, VALE OF LLANGOLLEN"
DC 44

(*In the Manchester Art Gallery*
Reproduced by permission of the Committee)

WATER-COLOUR
"A ROADSIDE IN WALES"
DC 45

DAVID COX

(In the Manchester Art Gallery
Reproduced by permission of the Committee)

WATER-COLOUR: "CHEPSTOW CASTLE FROM THE WYNDCLIFF"

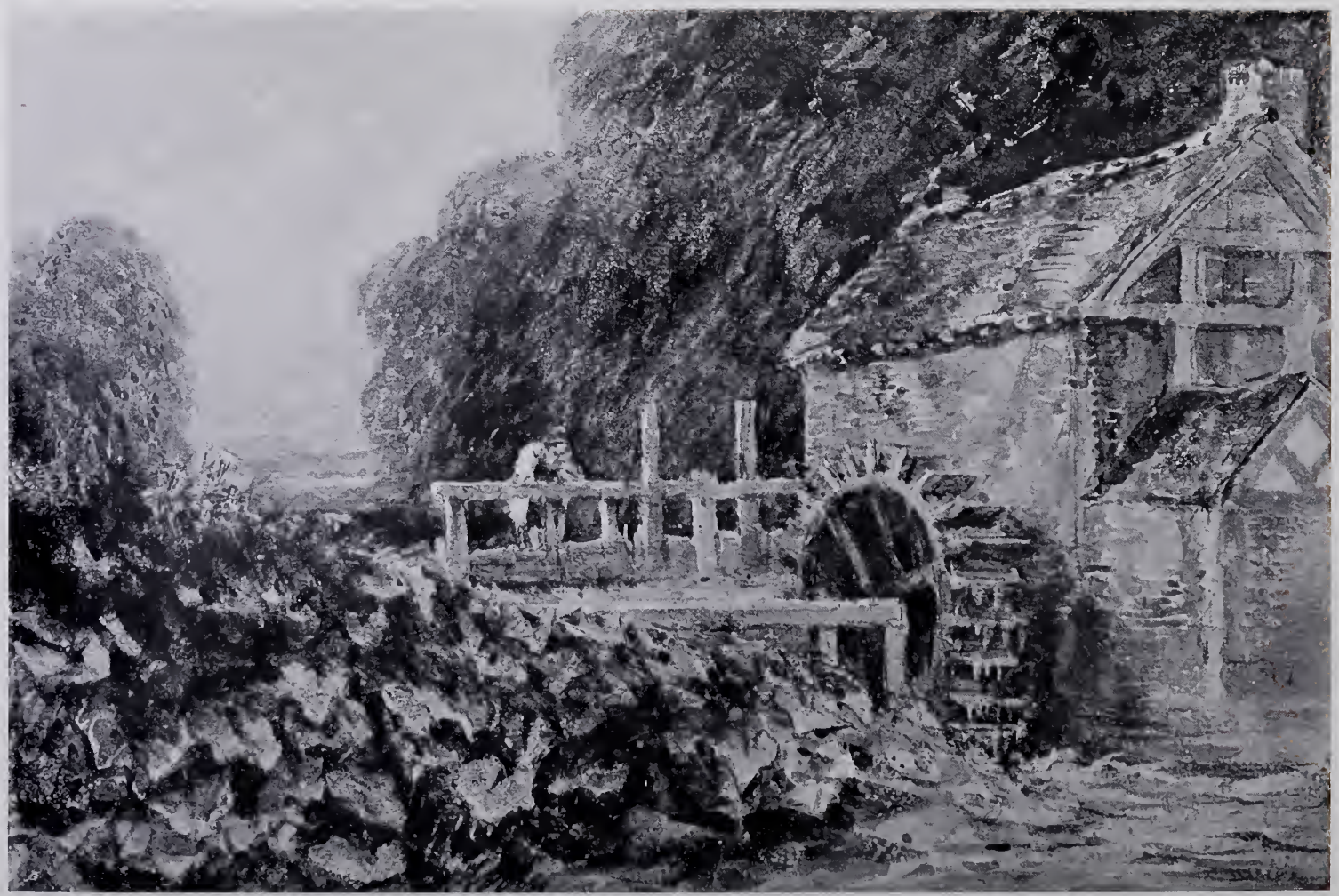
D C 46

WATER-COLOUR (DATED 1847)
"YOUNG ANGLERS"

(In the Collection of Arthur Sanderson, Esq.)

D C 47

DAVID COX



WATER-COLOUR
"THE MILLER AND HIS MILL"
DC 48

"THE WOODCUTTER." FROM THE WATER-COLOUR SKETCH (1858) BY DAVID COX.

(In the Collection of James Orrock, Esq., R.I.)

(Dedicated to "Mrs. Spiers with the Artist's sincere regards")

WATER-COLOUR (1851)
"VIEW IN WALES"
D C 49

WATER-COLOUR SKETCH: "STUDY OF TREES"
(In the Collection of James Orrock, Esq., R.I.)
D C 50

WATER-COLOUR (1849): "WATER-MILL, BETTYS-Y-COED"
DC 51 (*In the British Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR (1850): "THROUGH THE GREEN CORN"
DC 52

(In the Manchester Art Gallery
Reproduced by permission of the Committee)

WATER-COLOUR
"DRIVING HOME THE FLOCK"
DC 53

(By permission of Messrs. Thomas Agnew and Sons)

WATER-COLOUR: "THE HAYFIELD"

WATER-COLOUR (DATED 1851)
"RUSTIC COURTSHIP"

D C 55

(In the Collection of James Orrock, Esq., R.I.)

DAVID COX

(*By permission of Messrs. Thomas Agnew and Sons*)

WATER-COLOUR: "SNOWDON FROM CAPEL CURIG"

DC 56

(*Townshend Bequest, South Kensington Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR (EXHIBITED 1853)
"THE CHALLENGE—A STORM ON THE MOOR"
D C 57

WATER-COLOUR: "OUTDOOR SKETCH" *(In the Collection of James Orrock, Esq., R.I.)*

D C 58

WATER-COLOUR (1855): "CARTING VETCHES"

D C 59

THE LIFE AND WORK OF PETER DE WINT

E WINT, Cotman, David Cox—these fine landscape painters were all undervalued by most of their contemporaries. They toiled hard; they did much noble work, but England willed that they should win after death their full portions of renown. And thus their lives bear witness to the fact that England, though very fond of pictures, has ever been slow to honour the merit of her own most gifted painters.

Cotman, a rare genius, was not only the most unfortunate of the three, but the least fitted by temperament to bear up against misfortune. All his life he was one of Art's galley-slaves, and he kept sorrowfully to his oar until his mind drooped and all his strength was gone. Cox and De Wint were much happier in their lots, yet the united home comforts won by the two fell far short of those which were earned in other professions by men of quite commonplace ability. Since they died the value of their work has gone up by leaps and bounds. Indeed, it has increased so much and so rapidly that one cannot but wish that the State were entitled by law to retain some lasting pecuniary lien in the work of deceased artists. If only one per cent. of the vast sums paid at public auctions belonged by right of law to a National and Permanent Artists' Fund, the amount thus accumulated for the benefit of art would be considerable year by year, and the genius of the dead would become a source of monetary encouragement to the genius of the living. Some such trivial tax would be a recognition of art as a national asset of perennial value. It would do much good—if well administered. Meanwhile, in any case, the dead English masters rise higher and higher in the market, without doing even a pennyworth of good to the welfare of those arts which they served so faithfully and so well.

Peter De Wint is a case in point, the value of his pictures and drawings being now more than ten times higher than the "top" price attained during his life. Yet, somehow, despite his popularity in the market, De Wint is not yet known as he deserves to be. This was proved a few months ago by the last exhibition of Old Masters at the Royal Academy, where hundreds of persons expressed

surprise at the ample dignity and charm of the two large oil-paintings by which De Wint was represented. "Can this be the De Wint whom the dealers have found so profitable?" it was asked. "After all, what a strong, fine fellow he was, and is! How easily and well he takes his place among the best landscape painters of any school!" And this was said with a pleased astonishment, as though De Wint had hitherto been looked upon merely as a hack for the dealer's trade, and not as a man of genius. That such remarks should have been heard in a public gallery is all the more curious, as opportunities for the study of De Wint's water-colours and oil-paintings have not been hard to find these many years, his work in both mediums being admirably shown in the South Kensington Museum.

On the other hand, the man himself and his life are quite difficult to study, for little attention is drawn to them in books of reference. Even the "Encyclopædia Britannica" has nothing to say about De Wint, and only a very brief account is given of him in the "Dictionary of National Biography." It is true that Sir Walter Armstrong, in 1888, published a valuable book on De Wint, illustrated by twenty-four photogravures, and containing useful notes from private sources of information, notably from a memoir of her husband that Mrs. De Wint left behind in manuscript. But, unluckily, Sir Walter's book is scarce, so that the contents of it are unfamiliar to many students.

The De Wints were a prosperous family of Dutch merchants, and being in sympathy with their coat-of-arms, representing "four heads proper blowing the four winds," they became mercantile adventurers in a good many quarters of the globe. Some preferred short journeys and went to Paris, while others were more enterprising and set up their homes in the West Indies and also in New England. Peter De Wint's father, Henry, belonged to the American stock, and a part of his youth was passed in New York. The rest of his education was picked up in Europe, first at Leyden, where he graduated in medicine, and next in London at St. Thomas's Hospital. Whilst studying in London, and living on an allowance from America, Henry De Wint engaged himself to a Miss Watson, a Scottish girl from the Lowlands, whose father had emptied his purse out of loyalty to the scapegrace Prince Charlie. But Henry did not mind the girl's poverty, though his marriage to her in 1773 put an end to a project much favoured by his father—a marriage, namely, with a rich cousin in America. In his letters home Henry took care not to say that he had a wife, but the fact became known at last, and Henry was disowned and disinherited. When

thus thrown on his own resources he had two children as well as a wife to support, but he did what he could to make a practice in South Wales in the neighbourhood of Cardiff. The life there did not suit him, and in 1781 he established himself at Stone, in Staffordshire, where success of a modest kind was won at last. At Stone ten more children were born to him. Peter, the fourth son, came into the world on January 21, 1784.

The traditions of his family lead one to believe that Peter was not a boyish lad, fond of mischief, and ready to be tingled with a birch-rod after the joys of getting into scrapes. The little chap wandered alone in the woods and fields, watching the growth of trees and plants and the habits of birds and beasts; while at school he not only drew for his own amusement, but tried his best to teach his schoolfellows how to sketch. He early made up his mind that he would be an artist, and Peter De Wint never broke away from a set resolution. The mingling of Dutch and Scottish blood in his veins made him doggedly patient and tenacious, though not, I think, very friendly or very lovable. His father not only wished that he should be a physician, but started him in a course of medical training; and Peter, though firmly bent on following a different career, neither took the law into his own hands, as an English boy might have done, nor sulked over a routine of work distasteful to him. He was content to bide his time. With patience and with tact he would be able to choose his own profession and yet win his father's consent; and this, in the long run, he contrived to do, after he had taken some drawing lessons from a Mr. Rogers at Stafford, and after some progress had been made in his study of medicine.

It was in 1802, on Friday the 1st of April, that De Wint left home to seek his art education in London. His parents and friends wished him to set out on a luckier day, but Peter was in a hurry to say good-bye, and ever afterwards he welcomed Fridays and Firsts of April as fête-days for his chances of good luck. The object of his journey to London was to be bound as apprentice to that great and jovial mezzotinter, John Raphael Smith, for whom Turner and Girtin had coloured many prints. Smith was a rollicking sportsman as well as an able artist, and there were critics who disliked his passion for the prize-ring and the cock-pit. He lived in a gay, drinking age, and if he wasted much of his substance on amusements which have since gone out of fashion, he certainly found time in which to do a prodigious amount of work, quite aside from his mezzotints. It is said, for instance, on the authority of one of

Smith's relatives, that he drew at times as many as forty crayon portraits in a week, and sold them at a guinea a-piece. Each one was thrown off in an hour's rapid sketching, so that the doing of forty such portraits in six days must have been an effort beyond the powers of most dissipated clever men. But the main point is this—that Smith, however great his faults, was kind and unselfish, always eager to help his apprentices, and therefore glad to share with them his trade secrets. Briefly, then, he was a good master, and that was all important to De Wint, a lad of strong moral fibre, not in the least likely to be influenced by Smith's gaieties and late hours.

The indentures were signed on June 7, 1802, probably some weeks after De Wint had set up his home with Smith's family, in King Street, Covent Garden. The usual practice was to "bind" a lad for seven years, but Dr. De Wint, in lieu of paying a premium, arranged that his son should be at Smith's disposal for one year extra. It was thus that Peter De Wint began his art education, and for the next four years he was very busy, painting heads in pastel, and trying his hand at engraving. Sometimes, too, he went with Smith on a fishing excursion, in order that he might sketch from nature while his master played the part of Isaac Walton. He learnt much in this happy way ; and his enjoyment was all the keener as he was ever accompanied by his great chum and his fellow apprentice, William Hilton, a future Academician, then a boy of about sixteen.

Hilton was De Wint's junior by more than two years. Being shy and sensitive, he could not but admire the bulldog-like determination of De Wint, while De Wint was very well pleased with Hilton's admiration. So a friendship began at once, and it became in time one of the longest and truest friendships in the history of art. It must have been tested very often by Hilton's fits of vehemence followed by despondency ; but De Wint kept cool and did the right thing. Once, we are told, Hilton made up his mind that he would run away from his apprenticeship, owing to certain troublesome events that he disliked. This he confided to his friend, and then scampered as quickly as he could to his home at Lincoln. Raphael Smith lost his temper, as was natural, and insisted that De Wint should say where the truant had gone. He insisted again and again, but De Wint refused to betray his chum. To "old Father Antic, the Law," he was now a refractory apprentice, so he was haled before a magistrate, and the magistrate sent him to prison. Much the same thing happened to Girtin when he and his master, Edward Dayes, squabbled over their bones of contention. But Girtin's stay in prison was very different from De Wint's ; it was not unpleasant,

"THE THAMES FROM GREENWICH HILL." FROM THE WATER-COLOUR (1814-1829) BY PETER DE WINT.

(In the Collection of James Orrock, Esq., R.I.)

for the Earl of Essex rescued him and bought up his indentures. No such thing happened to our friend Peter. He sat alone in his cell, shivering with cold, nor did he regain his liberty until Hilton, hearing of his devotion, came from Lincoln to his rescue. Then Smith's mind was at ease again.

The two friends returned to work, but presently their thoughts were engrossed by the great crisis through which their country was slowly passing. Napoleon, rising to his zenith through the fall of nations, threatened invasion. London was alarmed, and volunteers for her defence were being enrolled on all sides. There are two enlistment tickets to show that Hilton and De Wint answered to the call of duty, and "were allowed to join the Battalion" of the St. Margaret's and St. John's Volunteers. Whether they put in many drills, and learnt to shoot fairly straight, I cannot say; but their readiness to serve their country is worth mention as a touch of character.

About a year later, in 1806, they managed to end their apprenticeship with J. R. Smith. It is not known how this came about in the case of Hilton. With De Wint it was the cause of a singular bargain. By the terms of his indentures he had still about four years to serve, yet Smith was willing to set aside his legal rights if his apprentice agreed to paint for him eighteen landscape pictures in oil-colours. These pictures were to be finished in two years, at the rate of nine a year. In the first twelve months he was to hand over to Smith nine paintings of the following sizes: "six of eleven inches by nine inches, two of one foot three inches and a half by one foot one inch and a half, and another of one foot three inches and a half by one foot and half an inch." In the second year the dimensions were to be somewhat different, but it is not necessary to detail them. De Wint agreed at once to Smith's conditions, and all the landscapes were duly finished, delivered, and acknowledged. It is clear that Smith knew his man.

I have dwelt upon this episode for two reasons, partly because of its singularity, and partly because it proves beyond doubt that De Wint started life as a painter in oil-colours. This fact is too often forgotten. It has long been assumed that he started oil-painting late in his career, and this error has prevented many experts from identifying his earlier canvases. The reasons that caused De Wint to give up his early practice of oil-painting were probably three in number: First, it was easier to sell water-colours; next, it was always De Wint's custom to make his way in a cool, businesslike manner, following the line of least resistance; and, third, he was confirmed in

his practical habit of mind by the petty miseries that his friend Hilton suffered in the interests of "high art" and of academic honours.

It was in 1806, on May 17, that the boys left Smith to set up for themselves. But before they took lodgings they paid a visit to Lincoln, where De Wint fell in love with his friend's sister, Harriet, then a girl of fifteen at home for the holidays. At Lincoln he made a few studies for the pictures which he had to do for Smith, and then, knapsack on shoulder, he trudged on foot into Staffordshire, sketching by the way. Hilton followed him to Stone, and both were lucky enough to be commissioned to paint several portraits.

In the autumn they returned to London and took rooms in Broad Street, Golden Square, hard by the house in which John Varley lived with happy thriftlessness. Varley, a most capable teacher, always bubbling over with enthusiasm, met De Wint, was struck with his ability, and was not happy until he had given the lad some lessons for nothing. Fortune smiled again soon afterwards, for De Wint was received by the famous Dr. Monro, the sometime teacher and patron both of Girtin and of Turner. Monro's evening class still met from time to time in the historic house on the Adelphi Terrace. I do not know whether the good doctor still gave his pupils an oyster supper and half a crown for their sketches; but his lessons were as good as they ever were, and De Wint was not slow to profit by them. He made friends with many beautiful drawings, but those by Girtin were his favourites. He fell at once under their influence, and he remained true all his life to the serene self-command which they inculcated.

Meantime, whilst working to complete his education, De Wint, like Hilton, had to paint for a living, and that he found means of selling his work was due, we are told, to the continued friendliness of Raphael Smith. It was a hard struggle, no doubt, but the two friends fought together, living in the same rooms and sharing expenses. "Each in turn supplied the wants of the other, so that ill-luck to hurt one had to hit both." Hilton, after leaving Smith, joined the Royal Academy schools. De Wint was ready to follow his chum's example, but it was not until March 8, 1809, that his wish was gratified. Two years later he passed into the life class, and began a steady course of figure drawing to which further reference will be made presently.

In May 1807, Dr. De Wint died, leaving a widow and five children. The eldest son inherited his father's practice and property. Being a selfish fellow, reckless and improvident, he left the younger children to shift for themselves, and made only a small provision for his

mother. Peter at the time was only twenty-three, but he shouldered the responsibilities which his elder brother declined to bear, and found means of giving a helping hand to his two sisters and also to his younger brother, Thomas, then a medical student seventeen years old. The head of the family died soon afterwards, and the mother, in sore need of money, came to Peter for support, and she remained with him until Thomas had made for himself a practice at Ancaster. She died in 1834, at the age of eighty.

Peter De Wint not only bore with courage and cheerfulness the many anxieties which followed his father's death, but, by dint of enterprise and hard work, he managed to get on fairly good terms with fortune. His water-colours, almost from the first, were easy to sell at small prices, so that he soon relied on them rather than fix his hopes on his beloved oil-paintings, which, somehow, were much harder to place. At last, encouraged by his modest success, he proposed an early marriage to Harriet Hilton, with the result that the wedding took place at Lincoln on June 16, 1810. This, I believe, was the only impulsive act of De Wint's thoughtful career. But it was justified by results. Mrs. De Wint was ever a true helpmeet, tender of heart, thrifty of mind, cheerful, and devoted to all her husband's interests. De Wint himself was not more business-like than she, and for the rest of his life he owed much to her unfailing tact and economy. At first he received only a guinea or so for a small drawing, and five shillings an hour for lessons. But these small earnings rose steadily if slowly, till at last, in 1827, a guinea an hour was paid for lessons, while the drawings were bought for prices that ranged from five to fifty guineas. It was in 1827 that Mrs. De Wint began to keep detailed accounts of all her husband's business transactions—a thing which every painter's wife should do if she wants to understand how difficult it is to earn an income out of art.

In the autumn following their marriage, after a sketching-tour in Yorkshire, the De Wints with Hilton settled themselves at 10 Percy Street, where their daughter was born the next summer, and where they lived for seventeen years. In 1827 Hilton was appointed Keeper of the Royal Academy and removed to his chambers in Somerset House, while the De Wints set up a new home at 40 Upper Gower Street (now 113 Gower Street), where they spent the remaining years of their lives.

Something must now be said about De Wint's adventures in the public galleries. He was seen for the first time at the Royal Academy in 1807, his pictures being a view of *Trentham* and another

of *Matlock High Tor*, one of his favourite subjects. A year later the Associated Artists came into being, and De Wint sent four water-colours to their first exhibition. In 1809 he was represented by nine, and was made a member of the Society. A critic of the period, writing in the *Repository of Arts*, not only speaks well of the newcomer, but shows by his comments that De Wint's style had already a settled character, remarkable for its "correct observation of nature," for its "fine selection of form," and for its "truth and simplicity of colour." "His works," the critic said, "have all the indications of superior thinking, all the germs of greatness"; and it is worth noting that these remarks showed much greater discernment than many of those which were made in later years, when the masterly outdoor sketches by De Wint were often described as "daubs of dirty colour."

In 1810, on January 22, De Wint joined the Water-Colour Society as an Associate. He was elected with Frederick Nash and with Copley Fielding. On June 10, 1811, he was taken from the list of Associates and made into a full Member, so that he was recognised earlier than David Cox, who was not received as an Associate until June 8, 1812. Between 1810–1812 De Wint sent eighteen drawings to the exhibitions of the Society at Spring Gardens, one being a view of *Conisborough Castle, Yorkshire*, an impressive subject to which he returned several times. The catalogue of 1815 mentions *A Cricket Match*, but I am unable to say whether it should be identified as the famous drawing of *The Cricketers*, which Mr. Ellison gave to the South Kensington Museum in 1860. It is still a noble water-colour, this drawing of *The Cricketers* (*see* Illustration w 40), despite the fact that the sky has perished. It has a singular history. De Wint, finding that he could not sell it, strained another piece of paper over its surface to save the outlay on a new stretcher. After his death, when preparations were being made for the sale at Christie's, the hidden water-colour was discovered by Mr. Vokins, who long delighted to speak of his surprise. If *The Cricketers* really is the same drawing as the *Cricket Match* of 1815, the period during which it lay *perdu* must have been one of nearly thirty-four years.

From 1818 to 1825 De Wint did not exhibit with the Water-Colour Society. When the Society was re-organised in 1821 he was asked to re-join, without passing through the grade of Associate, but he declined to accept the compliment "for the present." In the interval his work appeared twice at the Royal Academy, a *Watermill in Derbyshire* being hung there in 1819, and a view of *Bolton Castle, Yorkshire*, in 1820. From 1825, when he

"NEARING THE HARBOUR." FROM THE OUTDOOR SKETCH IN WATER-COLOUR BY PETER DE WINT.

(In the Collection of Miss H. H. Tatlock.)

rejoined as Member, De Wint was a constant exhibitor at the Water-Colour Society, sending as many as 359 drawings between that date and the year 1849. It is to be noted also that nearly all his subjects were English. He went for only one sketching-trip on the Continent, and that was the visit which he and his wife paid to Normandy in 1828. The landscapes there did not please him, and certainly his Normandy water-colours cannot be placed among De Wint's happiest achievements. His Welsh scenes are more fortunate, though their competition with those by David Cox proves that he is only second-best in his sympathy with Welsh scenery. To see De Wint at his very best, a true master entirely at his ease, you must study him in the work he did in his favourite sketching-grounds, as in Yorkshire, in Lincoln and its neighbourhood, in Derbyshire, and at Christchurch. In all his moods he was as English as Constable; and it was this fact, probably, that caused his patrons to be so true to him. They were friends as well as patrons, and in the late summer he visited and sketched at their houses in the country. Among the most hospitable of his well-wishers were the Earl of Lonsdale, the Earl of Powis, the Marquis of Ailesbury, the Clives, of Oakley Park, near Ludlow, the Heathcotes of Connington Castle, Mr. Fawkes of Farnley, Mr. Cheney, of Badger, in Shropshire, and Mr. Ellison, of Sudbrooke Holme, Lincolnshire.

It is commonly forgotten that De Wint was very busy at times for the publishers. Thus, in W. B. Cooke's "Picturesque Delineation of the Southern Coast of England," there are six illustrations by his hand, the most important being *The Undercliff, Isle of Wight* (June 1814), and *Blackgang Chine* (April 1, 1816). The other four are illustrations in the text. He contributed also to W. B. Cooke's "The Thames," doing about a dozen drawings between May 1, 1814, and January 1, 1829. One remembers, too, that he prepared travellers' sketches for the engraver, and made as many as sixty-two drawings from the Sicilian sketches by Major William Light, an officer who had served on Wellington's staff in the Peninsula. The drawings, very well engraved, were published in 1823 in a quarto volume entitled "Sicilian Scenery." And De Wint's industry in this field may be studied in two other books, namely, in J. S. Stanhope's "Olympia" (1824), and, again, in "Views in the South of France, Chiefly on the Rhone," which appeared in 1825, illustrated by twenty-four engraved plates after drawings made by De Wint from the sketches of John Hughes, of Oriel College, Oxford. Mr. Roget has given much attention to this little-known part of De Wint's

life-work, and every student should read what he says about it in his delightful "History of the Old Water-Colour Society."

To be brief, De Wint's life was one of incessant doing. He spent no time in the happy realm of day-dreams, but toiled on and on, filling every minute of the day with a money-earning activity. Every now and then he was sorely hit in his affections, as by Hilton's death on December 30, 1839; but even this blow did not long interfere with his stern delight in his routine of hard labour. Then, all at once, the continued strain began to tell upon his health. He became irritable, even bearish in manner, and was much disliked by many who met him for the first time. In 1843, whilst sketching in the New Forest, he nearly died from an attack of bronchitis, and it was with difficulty that he was brought back to London. The bronchitis returned again and again, increasing his weakness. Notwithstanding his condition, he worked intermittently through the winter of 1848–49, but when spring came he had barely strength enough to be present at his private view of drawings for the exhibition. He lingered on till June 30, 1849, dying in his sixty-sixth year. And they buried him in the churchyard of the Savoy, in the same tomb with Hilton and with Hilton's wife and mother.

De Wint, according to Sir Walter Armstrong, was of middle height, slender rather than stout, dark in complexion and in youth black-haired. His grand-daughter, Miss H. H. Tatlock, has in her collection a miniature portrait, in which the stubborn determination of De Wint is well represented (*see* Illustration w 7). Determination was the keynote of his character. Even his love of money, a ruling passion with him, was due to the fact that he had set his mind on thrift and saving, two virtues that sometimes betrayed him into singular actions. It is said, for instance, that he once charged twenty-five shillings for a lesson instead of a guinea, because he had drawn a few cows on the margin of his pupil's paper. At his private views, which he held in his drawing-room, he was a clever salesman, and marked with a white label those pictures which he sold. One wealthy aquaintance had the habit of saying that this or that "perfect gem" was beyond his reach, being marked as sold. De Wint grew tired of this device, and took his revenge. "The day came round for another private view. The friend arrived, and went into raptures before two labelled drawings. 'Now, De Wint,' he exclaimed, 'these are exactly the things I should like to possess; what a pity they are sold!' 'My dear fellow,' said the painter, slapping him on the shoulder, 'I knew you would like them, so I put the ticket on to keep them for you.' Tableau! But the

drawings had to be taken, 'otherwise'—De Wint would conclude —'I would have shown him the door.'" Again, it was the painter's custom to name his price in guineas. One client objected to this, and said: "There are no guineas now, De Wint, so we'll call it pounds." "No, you won't! My price, sir, is guineas." "Really, you don't mean to quarrel for the shillings?" "Don't I? The shillings are my wife's, and I would quarrel with you for two straws—so take them or leave them!" And to this it is convenient to add that De Wint, like many keen men of business, had a strongly religious bent of mind, that seems to have grown at last to be something of a mania.

After De Wint's death there was a sale at Christie's, in May 1850, when many water-colours and paintings were sold in 493 lots. They realised £2364 7*s*. 6*d*., thirty guineas being the highest price paid for a lot. But one must note here that Mrs. De Wint, always practical and wise, did not allow the best works to be sold at auction. She kept them for herself, and bequeathed them to her daughter, Mrs. Tatlock, a patriotic lady to whom we are all greatly indebted. It was she who presented *The Cornfield* and the great *Woody Landscape* to the South Kensington Museum, after she had tried in vain to give them to the National Gallery. Mrs. Tatlock's offer was declined by the director of that time, the late Sir William Boxall, who did not think it worth his while even to see the noble paintings so generously brought to his notice. By virtue of this mistake he will long be remembered.

The first thing to be noted about his art is the fact that De Wint was one of Girtin's art-children. Being himself a man of strong individuality, he did not imitate Girtin, but he penetrated to the inner essence and life of Girtin's style, and he borrowed from it what he needed for the perfecting of his own manner. The gold and silver that he borrowed thus was always re-minted, so that, when it passed again into circulation, it was really De Wint's own, though many could see at once that it still bore traces of the master by whom it was first handled and refined. This applies to the earlier work of De Wint, and particularly to the *Cookham-on-Thames* (w 11), with its placid water, its stately trees, and the serene completeness of the subject as a picture. The position of the sun-illumined church, the line of the background behind, the balance between the picturesque craft on the left and the tall trees across the Thames on the right—all this, so simple in unity of impression, so full of repose and self-command, should be noted by every one that desires to know De Wint in a style unusually redolent of Thomas Girtin's. But the handling, the manipulation, the full washes of colour, that is all

of De Wint's own finding; and the figures in the boats are also anticipative of his later manner.

I wish I knew the date of this water-colour; but certainties as to the chronology of De Wint's achievements are rare. It was his custom not to sign and date his work, and as he returned frequently to the same subjects, one gains little precise information from the catalogues of exhibitions. The utmost one can say is that the *Cookham-on-Thames* is an early water-colour, and that it contrasts helpfully with the many examples of his later manner, which are illustrated in this book. It is in strong contrast even with the *Westminster* (w 32, about 1808), and also with *The Thames from Greenwich Hill*, another early production, represented here by an excellent plate in colours. In this view of the Thames, plainly an outdoor sketch, De Wint found himself completely, retaining only the principles which helped Girtin to achieve his ample strength and his simple dignity of treatment. It may be assigned to the years 1814–29, when De Wint was engaged in working for Cooke's volume on the Thames.

John Varley, another of Girtin's disciples, used to tell his pupils that flat washes of colour in a good lay-in were like silences, for as every whisper could be distinctly heard in a silence, so every lighter or darker touch on a simple and masterly lay-in told at once, and was seen to be good or bad. Cotman was so much in sympathy with this truth that his large planes of uniform colour were often reminiscent of Japanese methods, though he had no acquaintance (so far as is known) with the arts of Japan. The same truth was always a guide to Peter De Wint; but he employed it in a manner of his own, and united it to a wealth of rich, blooming colour which has seldom been equalled. I might stir up unnecessary opposition were I to say, with Mr. James Orrock, that De Wint is "the great colourist of our landscape school, which means the greatest landscape colourist of any school." One may believe this, but taste in colour is not a thing to be proved beyond all dispute before any court of criticism, for the reason that no two persons ever see precisely the same colour. This fact, noticed by all students in a life-class, prevents me from dogmatising in De Wint's case; but that his full-chorded schemes of rich colour are a joy to all artists and connoisseurs, this one may say without the least fear of overstepping the limits of critical prudence. They are among the most wholesome and invigorating delights of the English school of landscape painting; and so rare are they in quality, so unique, that they have never been forged with success, unlike the colour and the style of Müller or of Cox.

"NEAR LOWTHER CASTLE." FROM THE WATER-COLOUR BY PETER DE WINT.

(In the Collection of Arthur Sanderson, Esq.)

I may be told that one man or talent, Samuel Austin, after "three precious lessons" from De Wint (he wept when the third came to an end), not only followed in his master's steps, but that some of his drawings were deemed worthy of De Wint's own hand. If so, those particular drawings have disappeared. No water-colour by Austin that is known to-day could ever for a moment be taken for one by De Wint. Not only is the colour different, both in quality and in orchestration, but the handling retains evident traces of the style which Austin met with in Liverpool. It has a provincial accent, very pleasant, to be sure, but not like the powerful and original speech of De Wint. But if De Wint's colour and technique cannot be well imitated by even a skilful artist, how impossible must it be to represent them at all worthily by means of illustrations in black and white! Such illustrations, indeed, however good, give us nothing more than remote hints of the scope and the force and charm of De Wint's best qualities. But, happily, thanks to Miss H. H. Tatlock, to Mr. James Orrock, R.I., and to Mr. Arthur Sanderson, the drawings may be studied here in seven good colour-prints, ranging in variety of subject from the rare sea-piece to the *Near Lowther Castle*, perhaps the most important of De Wint's large drawings. I do not say that these colour-prints are perfect, but they are invaluable as helps to a thorough knowledge of the master's art in water-colour.

Nothing shows more clearly the strength of a student's character than the choice of the pigments with which he works. As a rule, naturally enough, he is tempted to use the pigments which his master has tested and found useful. De Wint was an exception to this rule; and hence, no doubt, the curious in matters of technique will be glad to compare his palette with that of Girtin. Girtin used fifteen colours: indigo, lake, light red, Indian red, Roman ochre, ultramarine, madder brown, burnt sienna, Vandyke brown, Cologne earth, gamboge, yellow lake, brown pink, Prussian blue, and Venetian red. De Wint's usual palette had the following twelve colours: vermilion, Indian red, Prussian or cyanine blue, brown madder, pink madder, sepia, gamboge, yellow ochre, burnt sienna, purple lake, brown pink, and indigo. To these, for occasional use, he added four others in half-cakes: orange ochre, Vandyke brown, olive green cobalt, and emerald green. All these pigments were in hard cakes, but they were kept soft with water when in use. De Wint designed his own box, as he disliked to mix his washes on the enamelled leaves with which the trade boxes were fitted. He preferred bright metal leaves with a silver-like surface.

He employed two brushes, both large and round, but one was old and worn, while the other was new and came to a fine point. Students of his water-colours should note the foreground "accidents" and effects obtained with the worn brush. This may be studied well in some of the drawings at South Kensington, as in that rich and delightful study, *A Cornfield, Ivinghoe* (w 31), in which fine outdoor sketch the whole method of De Wint may be studied without difficulty. Not only was every part of it vigorously laid in with a full, flowing brush, but this *ébauche*, while still wet, was completed with a mosaic of added tints, some rich, some cold, all so harmonious that they charm one like precious stones arranged in a skilful manner. This result obtained, De Wint began to enliven the foreground with the worn brush, scraping with it here, adding a few crisp touches there, and producing all the effective incidents he desired. It may be seen also, in the *Cornfield, Ivinghoe*, that the passage from the foreground to the extreme distance has not the variety of gradation which would have been given to it by Turner or by Copley Fielding. De Wint, indeed, hated the washing process by which infinite gradation into space was always obtained. Had he washed his drawings, he would have injured the freshness and the bloom of his colour in all the deeper and more luminous parts; and that would have been an outrage on the aims for which he lived and laboured.

Three other things of interest may be noted also in the *Cornfield, Ivinghoe*. The trees, first of all, though good in their decorative value, are rather formal and arbitrary in rendering. They are trees, but one hesitates to give them a name. This doubt does not occur always when one looks at the trees in the outdoor sketches by De Wint; but the painter has a tendency in such studies to miss the varied character of the different species to which the trees belong. Next, the sky in this drawing has more of the English pageantry of cloud than is common in De Wint's art. De Wint was not by any means a thorough student of cloud-forms and of cloud-strata and windy weather. In his brilliant sketches, again and again, he left the sky untouched, quite content with the ivory-tinted Creswick paper upon which he delighted to work. In all this he was very different from Turner, Cox, and Collier, and from the other masters of the heavens who played the skylark in English water-colour. It was the English earth and her abundant harvests that appealed most of all to De Wint, and he managed to convey the weight of the English soil—the weight and the fresh aroma. His harvest scenes, so justly famous, are indeed full of the fragrance and life of our lusty English fields. For that one loves him; and one may say, in the

words of Thackeray, that "Fuseli, who wanted his umbrella to look at Constable's showers, might have called for a pot of porter at seeing one of De Wint's hay-makings."

The last of the three things to be noted in the *Cornfield, Ivinghoe*, is a certain change of colour in the sky that gives a brownish tone to the wet grays and the liquid pearl-tones. This may arise from the chemical action of a slight mixture of Indian red upon the other colours used. Indian red is a permanent colour when employed alone, but (being an oxide of iron) it is dangerous in mixtures, and also as an under-wash to warm the ground. In *The Cricketers*, for instance, it has eaten up the blue, giving a "foxey" tint to the whole sky. But these damaging changes of colour are rare in De Wint's drawings, the great majority of which have stood the test of time very well. In some of the oil-paintings, on the other hand, the demon that produces cracks has been very busy here and there. The splendid *Cornfield* at South Kensington has not escaped, for the sky has long been disfigured with many large cracks of a circular form, as though William Blake's *Ancient of Days* had scored it with his pair of compasses. And this should be borne in mind by the critics who tell us, from time to time, out of enmity to the lighter medium, that De Wint's water-colours are more perishable than his oil-paintings.

For the rest, our painter's art as a whole must be studied at first hand, without reference to this critic or the other. It is an art not very various in appeal, but it has moods of stateliness and solemnity which entitle it to a high place among the best modern landscapes. In architectural themes it has many equals and a good many superiors, for De Wint was not always able to suggest the weight of masonry and the romance that lingers about historic buildings. Thus, for example, there is a look of tinted pasteboard in the old houses in the large drawing at South Kensington, known as *West Front of Lincoln Cathedral*—a drawing, by the way, in which there is also a good deal of body-colour, a thing very rare in De Wint's work. That he turned out some fine subjects of an architectural kind is proved by *The Ruins of the Bishop's Palace, Lincoln* (w 27), the *Potter Gate, Lincoln* (w 24), the *Gloucester, 1840* (w 17), and again, by the *Bridge over a Branch of the Witham* (w 16). None the less, architecture was not De Wint's *forte*. It is known that he painted, in his original manner, some remarkable still-life pieces, including flowers; and it ought never to be forgotten, though it usually is, that he delighted to spend a holiday in sketching the picturesque fishermen at Sheringham. Indeed, he made many such holiday sketches from the life, as Mrs. De Wint states in her

biography. Is it not, then, high time that experts should rescue them from the artists to whom they have been wildly attributed, in the foolish belief that De Wint paid no attention to separate studies of the human figure? I saw one such study a little while since—a fresh, bonny water-colour, measuring nine inches high by five wide. It represented a fisherman on the sea-shore, with the breaking waves behind him. The fellow, standing erect, lacked a certain something which finds its way into professional figure-painting; but, on the other hand, he looked so stalwart and so robust that for a moment I hesitated to hold the drawing, lest I should find the weight of it to be about thirteen stone. These figure-sketches, beyond all doubt, have a real value in the life-work of De Wint; but it is, I believe, by virtue of his English country scenes that he takes rank, both in water-colour and in oil, as a leader in modern art. Yes, he certainly leads. There are but few modern landscapes that deserve to be hung side by side with those which Miss H. H. Tatlock sent this winter to the Old Masters Exhibition at Burlington House.

Then, last of all, De Wint appeals to us invariably as one of the rare men who draw and model vigorously with a wealth of colour, and paint their way with consummate ease to an enduring fame. De Wint never fills in an outline with tints, nor fiddle-faddles with his pigments. He is a born master of the brush, an original colourist, a genuine *painter*, certainly limited in scope, but strong, earnest, manly, dignified, austere, and individual; moved, too, by a delight in rusticity which enables him to people his landscapes with admirable cattle, with ably characterised flocks of sheep, with horses drowsy with the heat or tired by their field labours, and with groups of English bargemen and harvesters, that toil or rest happily in the sun, being true children of the Earth-Mother.

WALTER SHAW SPARROW.

"CROSSING THE STREAM." FROM THE OUTDOOR SKETCH IN WATER-COLOUR BY PETER DE WINT.

(In the Collection of Miss H. H. Tatlock.)

(*In South Kensington Museum*)

OIL-PAINTING
"A CORNFIELD"
W 1

PETER DE WINT

(In the Collection of W. G. Rawlinson, Esq.)

OIL-PAINTING
"LANDSCAPE STUDY"
W 2

(*In South Kensington Museum*)

OIL-PAINTING
"A WOODY LANDSCAPE"
W 3

PETER DE WINT

(In the Collection of Miss H. H. Tatlock)

OIL-PAINTING
"LINCOLN CATHEDRAL"

PETER DE WINT

(In the Collection of Miss H. H. Tatlock)

OIL-PAINTING
"REST IN THE CORNFIELD"

OIL-PAINTING: "MRS. DE WINT AND HER DAUGHTER"

(From the picture by William Hilton, R.A.; in the Collection of Miss H. H. Tatlock)

(From the miniatures in the Collection of Miss H. H. Tatloch)

PETER DE WINT AND HIS WIFE

W 7

(In the Collection of Gerald Robinson, Esq.)

CRAYON AND WASH STUDY
"A TIMBER-YARD"

W 8

SEPIA DRAWING
"BIRMINGHAM FROM SUTTON COLDFIELD" *(In the Birmingham Art Gallery)*
W 9

SEPIA DRAWING
"STRATFORD-ON-AVON" *(In the Birmingham Art Gallery. By permission of the Birmingham and Midland Institute)*
W 10

"A LANE WITH COTTAGES." FROM THE OUTDOOR SKETCH BY PETER DE WINT.

(In the Collection of James Orrock, Esq., R.I.)

(*In the Collection of Arthur Sanderson, Esq.*)

WATER-COLOUR
"COOKHAM-ON-THAMES"
W 11

WATER-COLOUR
"STUDY OF WEEDS"
W 12

(From Sir Walter Armstrong's "Memoir of Peter de Wint")

WATER-COLOUR
"CONISBOROUGH CASTLE"
W 13

(From Sir Walter Armstrong's "Memoir of Peter de Wint." Macmillan and Co., 1888)

In the Collection of Miss H. H. Tatlock)

WATER-COLOUR SKETCH
"CONISBOROUGH CASTLE, YORKSHIRE"
W 14

WATER-COLOUR
"SKETCH OF GLOUCESTER"
W 15

(In the British Museum)

WATER-COLOUR
"BRIDGE OVER A BRANCH OF
THE WITHAM, LINCOLNSHIRE"
W 16

(In South Kensington Museum)

(In the Collection of Miss H. H. Tatlock)

WATER-COLOUR SKETCH
"GLOUCESTER, 1840"
W 17

WATER-COLOUR: "SCALBY MILL NEAR SCARBOROUGH"
W 18

(From Sir Walter Armstrong's "Memoir of Peter de Wint")

(*In the Collection of Miss H. H. Tatlock*)

WATER-COLOUR (1847)
"COTTAGES AT ALDBURY"
W 19

(*In the Collection of J. L. Roget, Esq.*)

WATER-COLOUR: "ON THE WHARFE"
W 20

PETER DE WINT

WATER-COLOUR SKETCH
"THE RAINBOW"

W 21

"COAST SCENE." FROM THE OUTDOOR SKETCH IN WATER-COLOUR BY PETER DE WINT.

(In the Collection of Miss H. H. Tatlock.)

(In South Kensington Museum)

WATER-COLOUR
"THE TRENT, NEAR BURTON"
W 22

(By permission of Messrs Thomas Agnew and Sons)

WATER-COLOUR: "HARVESTING"
W 23

PETER DE WINT

(In the Collection of Miss H. H. Tatlock)

WATER-COLOUR: "POTTER GATE, LINCOLN"

W 24

(By permission of Messrs. Thomas Agnew and Sons)

WATER-COLOUR: "STACKING HAY"

W 25

WATER-COLOUR: "A ROAD IN YORKSHIRE" *(In South Kensington Museum)*
W 26

WATER-COLOUR: "RUINS OF THE BISHOP'S PALACE, LINCOLN"
W 27 *(In South Kensington Museum)*

(In the Collection of James Orrock, Esq., R.I.)

WATER-COLOUR: "NEAR EPPING FOREST"

W 28

PETER DE WINT

(In the Collection of James Orrock, Esq., R.I.)

WATER-COLOUR: "SUNLIGHT AND SHADE"

WATER-COLOUR (1841)
"WEST FRONT OF LINCOLN CATHEDRAL"

(In South Kensington Museum)

PETER DE WINT

(*In South Kensington Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR
"CORNFIELD, IVINGHOE"
W 31

"SACKBRIDGE HALL, NEAR LOWTHER." FROM THE WATER-COLOUR BY PETER DE WINT.

(In the Collection of James Orrock, Esq., R.I.)

(*In the Collection of Miss H. H. Tatlock*) WATER-COLOUR SKETCH: "WESTMINSTER"

W 32

(*In South Kensington Museum*) WATER-COLOUR: "THE HIGH BRIDGE, LINCOLN"

W 33

PETER DE WINT

(*In the Collection of Miss H. H. Tatlock*)

WATER-COLOUR
"ENTRANCE TO HADDON HALL"
W 34

(*In the British Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR SKETCH
"LANCASTER CASTLE"
W 35

(*In South Kensington Museum*)

WATER-COLOUR
"HARVEST TIME, LANCASHIRE"
W 36

WATER-COLOUR SKETCH
"BRAY-ON-THAMES"
W 37

(In South Kensington Museum)

WATER-COLOUR
"BRAY-ON-THAMES"
W 38

(In South Kensington Museum)

(In South Kensington Museum)

WATER-COLOUR
"ROMAN CANAL, LINCOLNSHIRE"
W 39

(In South Kensington Museum)

WATER-COLOUR
"THE CRICKETERS"
W 40

(In the Collection of Miss H. H. Tatlock)

WATER-COLOUR SKETCH: "TEWKESBURY"

W 41

PETER DE WINT

(By permission of Messrs. Thomas Agnew and Sons)

WATER-COLOUR
"THE VALLEY OF THE LUNE"
W 42

WATER-COLOUR (1847–48)
"NOTTINGHAM"

(*In South Kensington Museum*)
W 43

WATER-COLOUR (1848–49)
"ON THE DART"

(*From Sir Walter Armstrong's "Memoir of Peter de Wint"*)
W 44

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